

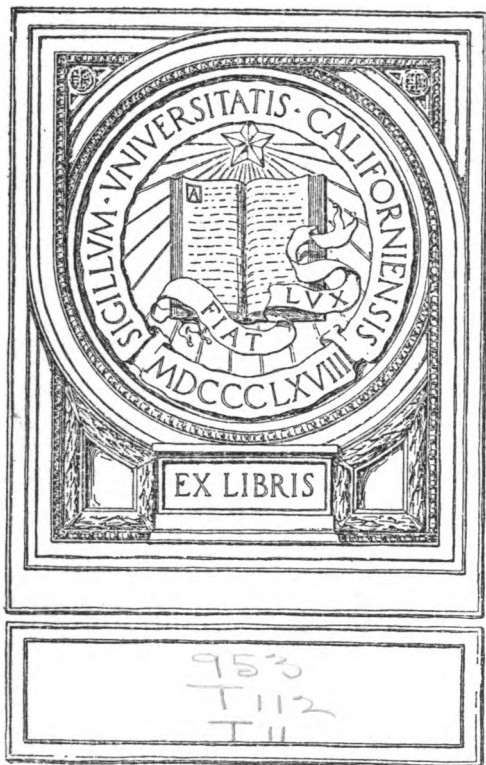
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# FATHER TABB

JENNIE M. TABB







## **FATHER TABB**



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CALIFORNIA

# FATHER TABB

His Life and Work

*The Poet-Priest of Virginia*

1845-1909

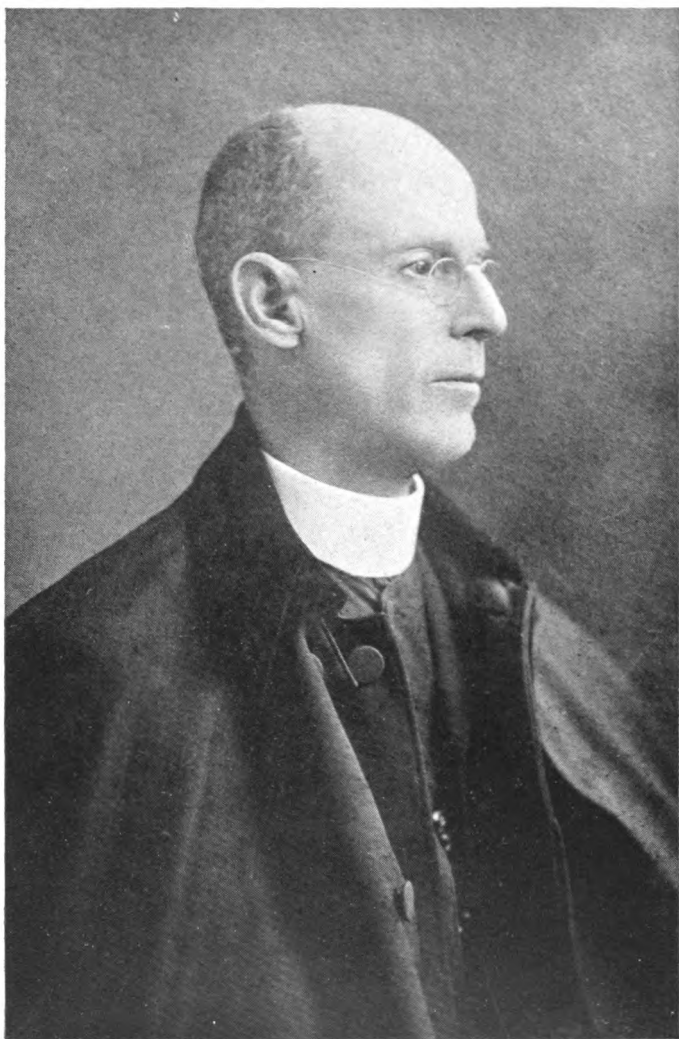
*“This man’s life made him worthy of a monument.”*

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**FATHER TABB**

# FATHER TABB

## *His Life and Work*

A Memorial By  
HIS NIECE  
JENNIE MASTERS TABB

Introduction By  
DR. CHARLES ALPHONSO SMITH  
*Natal Academy, Annapolis, Maryland*

SECOND EDITION



1922  
THE STRATFORD COMPANY, Publishers  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

TO VIND  
ABROGLAO



FATHER TALL

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*His Life and Work*

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# TO MARY ALPHONSO

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Boston, Mass.

The STRATFORD CO., Publishers

The Alpine Press, Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER  
WILLIAM BARKSDALE TABB



*The Elder Brother, under whose inspiration,  
guidance and instruction*

JOHN BANNISTER TABB

*Began his Literary Career*

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## Introduction

That Father Tabb has made a permanent contribution to poetic thought hardly admits of question. A few months ago the Oxford University Press added to its well known Oxford Garland Series a volume called Epigrams. Only two Americans were admitted, Emerson and Father Tabb. More than these two might well, I think have been included; but the omission of the others may serve to remind us that just as American novelists have created few characters that may be called world citizens, so American poets have contributed but sparingly to the treasure-house of English epigram. The reason is in both cases the same: it is not so much a lack of leisure as inability to use leisure.

Father Tabb had the leisure and the ability to use it constructively. He had also a concentric lyric genius without parallel in American literature. His thought does not move forward in leaps; it turns in on itself and seeks truth at the centre rather than on the circumference. It is circular rather than linear. Scientists have found a new sphere of activity in the attempt to "isolate the germ" of threatening diseases. To isolate is to conquer. Father Tabb's laboratory was poetical, not scientific. To it came moods and fancies, hints and shadows, joys and pains, hopes and high resolves. To get at the heart of each, to isolate

## INTRODUCTION

the germ, was the special task and the unique privilege of his life.

His work has been called that of a lapidary, but there is a difference. The products of the lapidary's skill have a certain hard finality. Their boundary and content are fixed and unyielding. The lapidary's work, like the multiplication table, means the same to you and to me, to this age and to coming ages. But Father Tabb's best quatrains are not mere quests for the *mot juste*, the one inevitable word or set of words. The boundaries that he puts about his thoughts are definite but elastic. His quatrains are emancipations rather than confinements of thought. They are achievements not merely in condensation but in condensation *plus* illumination. There is an aureole of suggestiveness about them that we do not find, for example, in the lines of Pope, though in the accepted sense Pope was the greatest master of epigram that the English race has produced.

Ring one of Pope's coins on the table and compare its resonance with that of these lines:

"O little bird, I'd be  
A poet like to thee;  
Singing my native song,  
Short to the ear, but long  
To love and memory."

There is perfection of phrasing here but no funereal finality. The thought receives a certain urge and élan

## INTRODUCTION

in the very moment of its embodiment. Father Tabb's appeal, therefore, evinces its distinctive excellence in its varying challenge to varying personalities. The lines called *Discrepancy*—

“One dream the bird and blossoms dreamed  
Of Love, the whole night long;  
Yet twain its revelation seemed,  
In fragrance and in song”

will appeal differently to the scientist, the sociologist, the literateur, the historian; but, however varying, the compression and glow of the thought are such that the appeal will be none the less vital, direct, and inescapable.

Browning enters Father Tabb's realm when he writes:

“All the breath and the bloom of the year in  
the bag of one bee:  
All the wonder and wealth of the mine in  
the heart of one gem:  
In the core of one pearl all the shade  
and the shine of the sea.”

These great lines form a sort of text to Father Tabb's life work. They mark out his goal. But what the English poet has announced as a principle the American poet has developed and illustrated in stanzas of unexampled beauty and fidelity.

The present volume will, I am sure, add appreciably to the range of Father Tabb's service, for it is in a

## INTRODUCTION

very real sense the biography of his mind. It will not only multiply the number of his readers but deepen in them the conviction that the holiness of beauty and the beauty of holiness find fitting exemplars in the lines and in the life of the poet-priest of Virginia.

C. ALPHONZO SMITH

University of Virginia, June 2, 1916

## Foreword

In the planning of this volume a two-fold object was borne in mind — that of doing honor to one whom Virginia is proud to call her son, and that of bringing to his many friends and admirers those little personal touches which will make him live again in their hearts.

So many-sided was his genius — Poet, Priest, Musician, Artist, Teacher, Friend—so filled was he with the spirit of mirth and with profound sympathy, with the joy of childhood and the sorrows of old age, that he ran the gamut of human emotions, and while our hearts are touched by the deep pathos of his “songs from the dark” and our own eyes become dim with tears, those same tears ere they fall will catch a sunbeam from his mirth in some sparkling quatrain.

The sources of my information concerning Father Tabb have been varied: his brother-priests, his friends, his pupils, his relatives, his own works, all have contributed to this little volume. Of his letters I have published none. He was known as the “poet of short metre” and might also have been called the correspondent of telegraphic brevity. He confined himself largely to limericks and quatrains on post cards, and short squib of notes; and disliked the thought that any of his personal letters should be given to the public. Therefore, I offer nothing from his pen except

## FOREWORD

such of his published works as will give an insight into what his biographer, Dr. William Hand Browne, calls "his sweet and delicate nature."

It is hard to portray a character so varied, hard not to emphasize one trait to the neglect of another of equal importance, but the readers of this tribute who knew him will realize the complexity of the task, and those who did not know him are urged to find him in his works — to see in his writings the delicacy, sweetness, charm, strength and loveliness of the man.

JENNIE MASTERS TABB

Farmville, Virginia, 1920

## Acknowledgment

I beg to make grateful acknowledgment of the invaluable assistance rendered me by many friends, chief among the number being: Mr. James M. Grainger of the State Normal School, Farmville; Dr. Charles Alphonso Smith of the Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.; Dr. J. C. Metcalf of the University of Virginia; Right Reverend D. J. O'Connell, Bishop of Richmond; His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons; F. Jos. Magri, D.D., of St. Paul's Church, Portsmouth; President M. F. Dinneen, D.D., of St. Charles College, Catonsville, Md.; Rev. Lucien Johnston of St. Thomas Church, Baltimore; Rev. Thomas A. Rankin of Charlottesville; Mr. Edwin Litchfield Turnbull of Baltimore; Rev. T. E. McGuigan of St. Patrick's Church, Washington; Dr. Thomas McCarthy of the Catholic University, Washington; Mr. James H. Harvie and the late James C. Martin of Richmond; Miss Estelle Smithey of the State Normal School, Farmville; Mrs. Mary Day Lanier of Greenwich, Conn.; and Sister Mary Paulina (M. S. Pine) of the Georgetown Visitation Convent, Washington.

I also acknowledge with much gratitude the kindly permission granted me by Messrs. Small, Maynard and Company of Boston; John Lane Company of New York; and Mitchell Kennerley of New York (Father Tabb's publishers) to quote from his works.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The help received from the above mentioned sources cannot be measured; not the facts in the life of Father Tabb which they have given me, not kindly assistance in referring me to others who could give the information I sought, have been the great help in the preparation of this little volume — but the genuine sympathy in the work, the enthusiastic interest that has been shown, the kind encouragement which I have received from all sides, have made it a pleasure indeed.



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**John B. Tabb at the age of ten.**

**“The Melody from Sidney Lanier’s Flute.”**

**His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons, who, in one day,  
baptized and confirmed Father Tabb and later  
admitted him to Holy Orders.**

**St. Peter’s Church, Richmond, Va.**

**Interior of St. Peter’s Church, Richmond, Va.**

**Cartoon autograph likeness of Father Tabb.**

**Facsimile of autograph verse written by Father Tabb  
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CHAPTER I  
GENEALOGY

Since the days of Adam the history of man has begun with a statement of his genealogy. In these modern times of advanced thought the vision of men and of women is forward rather than backward, the prime thought is for the *future* of the race, the descendant overshadows the ancestor, and the slogan of the age is Develop the Individual. In this day it is strange that anyone should care for a family tree or a coat of arms, yet family trees are as deep-rooted and as wide-branched as ever and coats of arms adorn American walls and are pointed out with pride.

In this age men make a living by hunting out ancestors who have been allowed to sink into oblivion and whose descendants have kept alive no family traditions; the only value attached to these ancestors when discovered and indubitably established as forbears direct is that their names act as an "open sesame" to some coveted membership in an organization almost as old as the country itself.

Although the above conditions do exist in our day and are (justly) the target for many an arrow of wit and of sarcasm, there are many of the "old

## FATHER TABB

families" who can not only produce a grandfather on this side, but who have the family line unbroken from the parent-stock in Old England or in Bonny Scotland. Of such a line was the poet-priest, John Bannister Tabb.

---

In the dawn of our Colonial life, when the early rays of the sun of civilization were just beginning to tinge the eastern shores of our Old Dominion, there set sail from a port of England one Humphrey Tabb and his wife Joanna. Arriving in the new country with its virgin soil, its unbroken forests and trackless plains, they made their home on a tract of fifty acres of land on Harris Creek in Elizabeth City County. In 1652 Humphrey Tabb was Burgess of Elizabeth City County. He died about ten years after that date, leaving to his only child, Thomas, about two thousand acres of land in Elizabeth City and Northumberland Counties.

Humphrey Tabb was succeeded by his son Thomas, and he in turn by his son John.

The first of the name found in Amelia County is the great-grandson of Humphrey and Joanna Tabb, Colonel Thomas Tabb of "Clayhill," who was rated as one of the richest merchants in Virginia. An interesting item in his will, dated December 28, 1769, is a legacy of sixty pounds to one Nancy Booker to be laid out in the purchase of a negro girl, and fifteen pounds to buy mourning.

## GENEALOGY

John Tabb of Amelia, son of Colonel Thomas Tabb, was Burgess, member of the Committee of Safety, etc., and was married, February 17, 1770, to Frances Peyton of Gloucester County.

A decade or so after the arrival in this country of Humphrey and Joanna Tabb, Major Robert Peyton of Rougham, County Norfolk, England, son of Thomas and Elizabeth (Yelverton) Peyton (daughter of Sir William Yelverton of Rougham, County Norfolk, and his wife, Ursula, daughter of Thomas, Lord Richardson) came to Virginia. He named his estate "Iselham" for the Peyton estate in Cambridgeshire, England. He was an attorney by profession but in 1680 was appointed major of the Gloucester County militia.

Among the manuscripts in the College of Arms, London, are notes that Robert Peyton was living in Virginia as late as 1693 and these reports show him as "sine posteritate"—his children were born in Virginia and not reported in England.

Thomas Peyton, eldest son of Sir Robert Peyton, born in Virginia in 1675, married in 1700, Frances Tabb, daughter of John Tabb, "Church Warden of North River Parish."

From the time of this first marriage of a Peyton and a Tabb down to the present day the families have so intermarried that it is almost impossible to trace them separately.

Upon the death of Sir John Peyton of Iselham, Cambridgeshire, England, in 1721, John, the son of

## FATHER TABB

Thomas and Frances (Tabb) Peyton, became the lawful heir to the baronetcy. In the Kingston Parish Register his children are recorded from Elizabeth, born in 1756, to Henry Yelverton, Born in 1770, as "Children of Sir John and Frances Peyton."

His claim to the title was also recognized in Virginia. In the old Church Register it is noted that "Sir John Peyton and Thomas Smith, Jr., Gent., were appointed deputies to meet clergymen and vestries in convention to regulate all the religious concerns of the Protestant Episcopal Church — its doctrines, worship, etc." Sir John Peyton was lieutenant-colonel of Gloucester County from 1775 to 1782.

The second daughter of Sir John Peyton was Frances, who married John Tabb of "Clayhill" in Amelia County, a notice of whose death appeared as follows in the *Richmond Enquirer* of April 25, 1828:

"Died, at 'Clayhill,' her seat in Amelia County, Virginia, on the 12th of April, 1828, Mrs. Frances Tabb, relict of the late John Tabb, a daughter of the late Sir John Peyton of Iselham in the County of Gloucester, baronet, lineally descended from the Peytons of Iselham in Cambridgeshire, England. By the death of his son John Peyton (a younger brother of Mrs. Tabb) this ancient baronetcy became extinct. As he never assumed the title after his father's death, it was claimed and held by persons in England not entitled to it under a false allegation in Debrett's 'Baronetage' that Sir John Peyton who emigrated



## GENEALOGY

to Virginia during the civil wars in England left no male heirs.'\*

This notice in *The Enquirer* was taken from an obituary of Mrs. Tabb written by the celebrated John Randolph of Roanoke, an intimate friend of the family.

John Tabb died about 1798, his personal estate being reckoned at £31,879, 4s, 3½d. His children

\*The rest of the obituary is as follows:—

"Beautiful in person, affable, graceful and accomplished in manner, endowed with wealth unexampled in that quarter of the country, with a strength of character beyond her sex, no woman ever fulfilled the duties of wife, mother, or mistress of a family with more fidelity and seal than Mrs. Tabb. Her munificence was princely, rather than that of a private person in our country. Her virtues were strictly domestic. Intent on promoting the welfare of others, utterly regardless of self, she was found occupied in some household labor or some work of love, ministering to the sick, whether among her descendants, her guests, her neighbors, or her slaves. Her hospitality was boundless, her benevolence without a parallel. The generosity of her character has never been exceeded, her fortitude and presence of mind never surpassed.

"This is no vulgar eulogium of a descendant of a legate, it is the unbiased and unbought offering of one who was long honored with her friendship, to whom for more than forty years she was an object of respect approaching to reverence, who loved her living and laments her dead.

"The following anecdote will serve to show that the writer has not been drawing on his imagination for these traits of character. Between midnight and dawn Mrs. Tabb was aroused by a tremendous noise in her dining room. Instead of indulging in female terrors, she rose from her bed, took a candle in her hand and proceeded along to the room from whence the noise came. She found the whole plastering of the ceiling had tumbled to the floor. She told the writer of these lines that she thought it was some thief or thieves, whose object was to break into the large pantry adjoining, where liquors, plate, etc., were kept, and was sure, she said, that as soon as they saw me they would run. Yet there was nothing masculine in her person or manners. No fine lady could be more delicate than this fine woman."

Written April, 1828, by John Randolph of Roanoke.

## FATHER TABB

were as follows: Martha Peyton who married, in 1797, William B. Giles, U. S. Senator and afterwards Governor of Virginia; Frances Cook who married in 1801, Dr. John R. Archer; Mary, who married Bathurst Randolph; Thomas and John Yelverton (both students at William and Mary College); Signiora, who married Theodorick Bland Bannister; Harriet (died in infancy); Mary Ann who married, in 1815, William I. Barksdale of Richmond — their daughter Harriet married Hon. John Y. Mason.

John Yelverton Tabb had only two children: Harriet who married Robert C. Jones of Gloucester County; and Thomas Yelverton Tabb.

Thomas Yelverton Tabb married his first cousin, Marianna Bertrand Archer (daughter of Dr. John R. Archer) and had the following children: Harriet Peyton, William Barksdale, John Bannister (afterwards the poet-priest) and Thomas Yelverton Tabb.

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE

John Bannister Tabb was born March 22, 1845, at "The Forest," in Amelia County, Virginia, about thirty miles from the capital city of Richmond. This was the home of his maternal grandfather, Dr. Archer. Not long after his birth his father moved to the adjoining plantation "Cassels" where the family resided until the death of Dr. Archer. They then returned to "The Forest."

John Tabb's early years were passed under the spell of the Old Virginia regime. His life was that of the Southern child on the plantation: in the companionship of his sister and brothers; in the loving care of a father who had ample time to devote to the development and welfare of his children; under the gentle influence of a mother "strong, tender, and beautiful in character, an honor to the sunny Southland which has given to our country such noble types of womanhood." His second volume of Lyrics is dedicated

"To the Memory of My Mother

#### THE COWSLIP

It brings my mother back to me,  
Thy frail, familiar form to see,

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## FATHER TABB

Which was her homely joy;  
And strange that one so weak as thou  
Shouldst lift the veil that sunders now  
The mother and her boy."

And among the influences surrounding his childhood, not the least was that of a doting negro Mammy who instilled into her "white chillun" the song and story and simple faith of her race. Father Tabb used to tell with delight that his Mammy proudly exhibited him as "the ugliest baby ever born in Virginia." And only a few months before his death he refers to her in one of the pathetic little poems written in his blindness:

### "MAMMY"

"I love her countenance whereon  
Despite the longest day,  
The tenderness of visions gone  
In shadows seemed to stay.  
And now, when faithless sight is fled  
Beyond my waking gaze,  
Of darkness I am not afraid —  
It is my Mammy's face."

At the time of her death he wrote on the fly-leaf of one of his own volumes:

"To Jinny, whose faithful service to our household ended only with her life:

To her, O Tenderness Divine,  
Be Thou, as she to me and mine!"

## CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE

Reared in the atmosphere of luxury and ease of the Old South, with his own servants from his babyhood, he came under all the gentle influences of a home sheltered from contact with anything but the grace and chivalry of the best of his race. He was proud of the fact that he learned to read and write at his mother's knee, where he learned his prayers. Later, his education was in the hands of a tutor, a Mr. Thomas Hood, who was for years an inmate of the Tabb home where he taught the children of this and several other families of the neighborhood.

An eminent writer of the day, in a biographical sketch of Father Tabb, says: "His boyhood, I think, must have been spent with nature and with his own thoughts—beautiful hidden dreams and longings which no one, perhaps not even his mother, suspected." How different from this picture of the child-dreamer is the reality!

Mr. James B. Harvie of Richmond, Virginia, a cousin, gives an interesting sketch of the home life and early years of the poet; in a recent letter to the writer he says:

"The first school I ever attended was "Cassels" (adjoining "The Forest") your dear grandfather's and grandmother's lovely home, rendered particularly attractive by their charming personality; we boys were especially attracted to them by daily kind-

## FATHER TABB

nesses. Your father, Colonel William B. Tabb, was at that time a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute. While at that school he came home on a furlough and I remember how straight he was and what a graceful figure he had — we boys thought him the handsomest fellow we had ever seen. I never saw him very often after that time as he not long afterwards entered the army and was soon made Colonel of the fifty-ninth Regiment. I have heard Colonel Fortune Mosby, the Major of that Regiment, say that Colonel Tabb was a most gallant man and one of the best officers of his rank in our army.

“Your uncle, ‘Johnny,’ as we called him, was one of the most joyous, rollicking, loving, and *trifling* boys I ever went to school with. I don’t think he ever studied his lessons a minute, and consequently, Mr. Hood had to chastise him frequently. At that period every one of us hated Mr. Hood because he was a Yankee and talked through his nose, and we worried him sadly on many occasions—but he was really a noble man and we all (especially Johnny) admired him very much when he enlisted in our army and died a soldier’s death.

“I have seen Mr. Hood whip your uncle Yelverton and he never whimpered but when Johnny was whipped, Yelverton yelled louder than he did; he said it did not hurt him like it did to see his brother punished.

“Your uncle John was by far the most popular boy in the school as well as in the county — always



**JOHN BANNISTER TABB AT THE AGE OF TEN**





## CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE

making fun for the boys and girls and for the older people as well. He was especially gifted as a cartoonist, and in a minute could draw a ludicrous likeness of any one, especially of my dear father, Dr. Harvie, who was one of his special cronies. I have heard Father threaten to box his ears for his impudence—he would get mad as a hornet, and the next minute be convulsed when Johnny would show him a caricature of some other valued friend.”

John Tabb was a punster from his cradle: when he and his brother Yelverton were about twelve and ten years old, Yelverton wrote a love letter to one of his little schoolmates and (for safe keeping until it could be delivered) hid it in Johnny’s book of piano exercises. Of course Johnny found it, read it, and being an inveterate tease, told of it in Yelverton’s presence. When the latter angrily denounced him for reading a note not intended for him, Johnny smilingly replied: “I have a right to read any ‘note’ found in my exercise book!”

The accompanying likeness of John Tabb in his tenth year was the work of a traveling artist who stopped at “The Forest;” the old daguerreotype was taken, not with any idea of preserving the childish features of the future poet-priest, but to get a picture of old Carlo, William Tabb’s favorite hunting dog.

When the photograph was to be taken little Johnny requested that he be allowed to hold Carlo. He was particularly devoted to his brother William

## FATHER TABB

and felt all a small boy's pride and interest in anything that concerned him, and so intent was he on getting a good picture of the dog that an excellent likeness of both dog and boy was obtained.

Very early in his boyhood John Tabb showed great musical and artistic talent and it is strange to note that his genius as a writer was much later in its development; not until after he had passed his twenty-fifth year did he begin to give any indication of the marvelous powers he possessed. His vivid imagination, his passionate love of the beautiful in nature, in art and in music, his keen wit and sparkling humor were universally acknowledged by his friends and associates, but his desire to give the public the benefit of his visions and his unique interpretations, lay dormant through his youthful years. In the early days of his literary career his brother William was his editor as well as his inspiration and his guide; this brother was noted for the beauty and purity of his English — it was said that he was the only member of the Charleston, West Virginia, bar whose extempore speeches could be printed *verbatim*.

When John Tabb was but a little child, so great was his love for music and so unusual his talent in this direction that it was expected he would make it his life-work. A great deal of his early instruction he received from Mrs. Judith Blair of Lexington, Virginia, who (although not a relative) was affectionately known as "Aunt Judith." When only a boy he spent from six to eight hours daily in

## CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE

piano practice and even in the evening of life, when his light was turned to darkness, this gift remained with him. At the time of his death, in his sixty-fifth year, a friend spoke of him as follows: "A brilliant performer on the piano, his taste inclined much to minor chords and musical reverie that caused the listening students to first pay breathless attention and then to steal noiselessly away, leaving the old musician alone with his melody and his memories."

## CHAPTER III

### THE YOUNG SOLDIER

Young Tabb was only sixteen years old at the beginning of the War between the States—the three brothers responded to their country's call: the eldest, William, was, at the age of twenty-two, Colonel of the Fifty-ninth Virginia Infantry with young Yelverton, only fourteen years old, a private in his Regiment; and it may be noted here that the boy served for the four long years of the struggle without a furlough.

From childhood John Tabb was troubled with weak eyes; in his twelfth year an oculist examined them and found a defect which science could not remedy, and for several years his tutor did most of his reading for him. On account of defective sight he was debarred from military service, so he entered the navy as Captain's Clerk on the Confederate States Steamer, "Robert E. Lee" which, under the command of his cousin, the gallant Captain John Wilkinson, ran the blockade at Wilmington, North Carolina, twenty-one times.

On the first voyage a Major Price died of yellow fever and his body lay on deck as the "Robert E.

## THE YOUNG SOLDIER

Lee" drew near San Salvador. Years later Father Tabb referred to the incident in the poem

### "OFF SAN SALVADOR"

"It lay to westward — as of old  
An emerald bar across the gold  
Of sunset, where a vision grand  
First beckoned to the stranger's land.  
And on our deck, uncoffined, lay  
A child, whose spirit far away  
The wafture of an angel hand  
Late welcomed to a stranger land."

In speaking of this incident to a friend, Reverend Joseph A. Perrig, Father Tabb explained that the "uncoffined child" referred to was the late Major Price and that as he saw the beautiful sunset off San Salvador, he could not help imagining the dead man as seeing the light of Our Saviour. Father Perrig said: "When he read his poem to me I asked 'Were you a poet then? i. e., did you write poetry?' 'No,' he said, 'the poetry I felt indeed, but could not give expression to it!'"

Another incident in his life as blockade runner on the "Robert E. Lee" is commemorated in the poem:

### "THE LOST ANCHOR"

Ah, sweet it was to feel the strain,  
What time, unseen, the ship above

## FATHER TABB

Stood steadfast to the storm that strove  
To rend our kindred cords atwain;

To feel, as feel the roots that grow  
In darkness, when the stately tree  
Resists the tempest, that in me  
High Hope was planted far below!

But now, as when a mother's breast  
Misses the babe, my prisoned power  
Deep-yearning, heart-like, hour by hour,  
Unquiet aches in cankering rest."

To use Father Tabb's words: "That anchor liked to break my heart." The ship was caught in a heavy storm off Cape Fear River in North Carolina. The night was very dark, lowering clouds covered the skies and no ray from the hidden moon pierced the blackness that surrounded them. They were obliged to drop anchor, but did not know what their position was. When dawn broke they were shocked to find that they were within the blockading line, and that seventeen Union ships were in sight. Not having time to draw up the anchor, they cut the cable and made their escape mid a storm of shot and shell.

While in the service John Tabb also visited Havana, St. Thomas Island, London, Dover, Calais, Paris, Bologne, and Glasgow. Twenty engravers who were to make the Confederate money, and two young professors (Mr. Blair and Mr. Thomas Price) were

## THE YOUNG SOLDIER

passengers on the return voyage. In after years Dr. Price succeeded Dr. Gildersleeve in the Faculty of the University of Virginia and published the first essay on Father Tabb's poems.

The "Robert E. Lee" was captured in 1864 by the United States steamer "Keystone" and young Tabb, with other prisoners, was sent to Point Lookout, Maryland, where they were confined for eight months. Although these months of imprisonment with their suffering and inactivity were a sore trial to the young heart, they were the source of one of the deepest and tenderest friendships of his life, for among his fellow prisoners was his brother-poet, Sidney Lanier, who shared with him the gift of music as well as of verse.

Never robust, John Tabb's health was much impaired by the confinement and hardships of prison life—the memories of which were deeply burned into his heart. One day, while lying ill with fever, there were borne to him the silvery tones of a distant flute—so faint, so delicate as to be scarcely distinguishable; at first he thought it but a figment of his fevered brain but upon inquiry he found that the music was a reality and the player Lanier, whom he met a few days later. Many were the heavy hours of prison life that were lightened by the music of this flute, which Father Tabb says was his greatest consolation at that time, and which remained with him always, among so many painful recollections, "a thing of beauty—a joy forever."

## FATHER TABB

There was one melody, an improvisation, that Lanier played over and over. It was so beautiful and had such a haunting note of sadness that few of his fellow prisoners could hear it without tears. Mr. Edwin Litchfield Turnbull of Baltimore has harmonized and published this melody. In writing of it Mr. Turnbull says:

"This quaint bit of music was breathed from the silvery-toned flute of that master of song and music, Sidney Lanier, whose memory is especially dear to the citizens of Baltimore among whom the Southern poet resided many years and where, in a quiet grave in Greenmont, he sleeps. A gallant Confederate soldier in the Civil War, he was captured and confined in Point Lookout Prison; but he managed to slip by the guard with his beloved flute—the companion of many a weary march—smuggled up his sleeve. Thereafter he cheered his fellow-prisoners with soulful music. The fragment of melody which I have here presented was given me by Lanier's comrade in prison, the Baltimore Poet-Priest, Father Tabb, who many years after yet vividly recalled the haunting melody from the poet's flute. He sang it to me one day and I have tried to give it an appropriate setting."

Father Tabb refers to Lanier's music as follows:

### "LANIER'S FLUTE"

"When palsied at the pool of thought  
The poet's words were found,  
Thy voice the healing angel brought  
To touch them into sound."



## A Melody from Lanier's Flute.

Arranged and Harmonized by  
Edwin Liebfeld Turnbull.

**Piano.**

*Simply.*

*a tempo*

*cresc.*

*ritenuto*

*a tempo*

*rit.*

*agitato*

*pp*

*ppp*

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The "Melody from Lanier's Flute," as arranged by Mr. Turnbull, has charmed many audiences. Under the direction of Mr. Turnbull it has been played many times by the United States Marine Band at the Capitol, at the White House, at the Marine Barracks, and on their annual concert tours; it has also been rendered by an orchestra of twenty-one Boston Symphony musicians at Bar Harbor, Maine, and by a sextette of Peabody musicians at the Johns Hopkins exercises; when the Sidney Lanier Memorial Exercises were held March 1, 1914, at the First Unitarian Church, Baltimore Mr. Frederick G. Gottlieb who was a friend of Lanier and sat next him in the old Peabody Orchestra, played "The Melody" as a flute solo. Mr. Gottlieb was the soloist at the Johns Hopkins exercises also. "The Melody" was played at the North Congregational Church at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in December, 1914, with Arthur Brooke, second flute of the Boston Symphony, as soloist, and during the same year Mr. J. Fred Wille, director of the Bach Festival at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, played "The Melody" at several of his organ recitals, giving also the history of the composition.

## FATHER TABB

The intimacy between the two young men grew and ripened and lasted until the death of Lanier. And even in death the bond was unbroken: Lanier is often mentioned in Father Tabb's poems, and always with a yearning tenderness which bespeaks the depth of the feeling between them.

When the young soldiers were released in February 1865 and stepped once more into God's free air and sunshine, young Tabb (not quite twenty years old) said: "I felt that I was in the Kingdom of Heaven!" But in reality he was facing a ruined and desolate country. Where once the broad acres of his father's plantation smiled with plenty and where rang the happy melody of the old plantation melodies, sung by the incomparable voices of the negroes, all was waste; a little later in the spring these fields, once showing the emerald of the tender blade of grass or grain, would blossom with the four-years growth of poverty—sassafras and the trailing vine of the dewberry.

Young Tabb's county of Amelia had given her all to her beloved South: her sons, her stores, her treasured family silver. The brass andirons and fenders (the pride of many a "Mammy" who kept them like burnished gold) went for the manufacture of cannon, and the linen from many a family chest found its way to the hospitals in neat rolls of bandage and packages of lint scraped by the loving hands of the women at home.

The desolation around him, however, did not

## THE YOUNG SOLDIER

dampen the ardour of the young patriot's spirit nor lessen the buoyancy of his outlook upon life.

To the last day of his life he was as devoted a Confederate as Father Ryan; and never could be induced to go north of Mason and Dixon's line. One of his students at St. Charles College, Mr. Barrett, lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, and was exceedingly anxious for Father Tabb to visit him in his home. But the invitation was declined with the following lines:

“Who would think on  
A Rebel with Lincoln?  
Or venture to ask a  
Friend to Nebraska!  
Another might dare it,  
But I cannot, Barrett,  
Though truly to thee  
A friend. J. B. T.”

As ardent a Virginian as he was a Confederate, he cultivated the friendship of many Virginians who lived in the vicinity of the College. Upon one occasion, when asked if he had called upon some family in the neighborhood, he laughingly replied: “O no! I only go to see *Virginians!*”

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY MANHOOD AND CONVERSION TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH

While serving on the "Robert E. Lee," John Tabb had won the friendship and affection of Major Ficklin who, recognizing his remarkable musical talent, and realizing that the boy was now thrown on his own resources, induced him to come to Baltimore under his patronage to resume the study of music. For a year he devoted his entire time to this work under Professor Roemer, but at the end of the year the Ficklin fortune collapsed and he was forced to give up his course.

Thus, at the age of twenty-one we find him a teacher in St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal School in Baltimore.

John Tabb was baptized in infancy and confirmed in his boyhood in the Episcopal faith — the faith of his forbears for many generations back. The old Colonial Church, known as the "Grub Hill Church," still stands in Amelia County, the guardian of the Tabbs from the time of their first settlement in the County. Here their children were christened, confirmed and married and around its sacred walls many members of the family now sleep, among them

## EARLY MANHOOD AND CONVERSION

the brother of Father Tabb. In his young manhood he, himself, was a Lay-Reader in the old Church under the Reverend Parke Farley Berkeley who was for fifty-two years the spiritual father of that congregation.

St. Paul's School in Baltimore was attached to Mt. Calvary Church, under the pastorate of Rev. Alfred Curtis "whose face was already turned towards Rome." Mt. Calvary was "High Church" to the extent that its Rector "said Mass," preached devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and called himself a priest, wearing cassock and biretta. A strong friendship grew up between him and the young teacher who soon fell under his spiritual influence and accepted him as his guide. And this influence was in no way diminished when John Tabb left St. Paul's in 1870 to accept a better position in another Episcopal institution, Racine College, Wisconsin.

After a year of service at Racine he resigned the chair he held, to follow the bidding of a voice within which led him to a higher service, and entered the Episcopal Theological Seminary at Alexandria, Virginia.

Just about the time the young teacher began his course at Alexandria, the Rev. Mr. Curtis reached his decision in a matter which he had for a long time had under consideration; he resigned his pastorate and very soon left the Anglican Communion, preparatory to going into that of the Roman Catholic faith. He went to Oxford to consult Dr. Newman

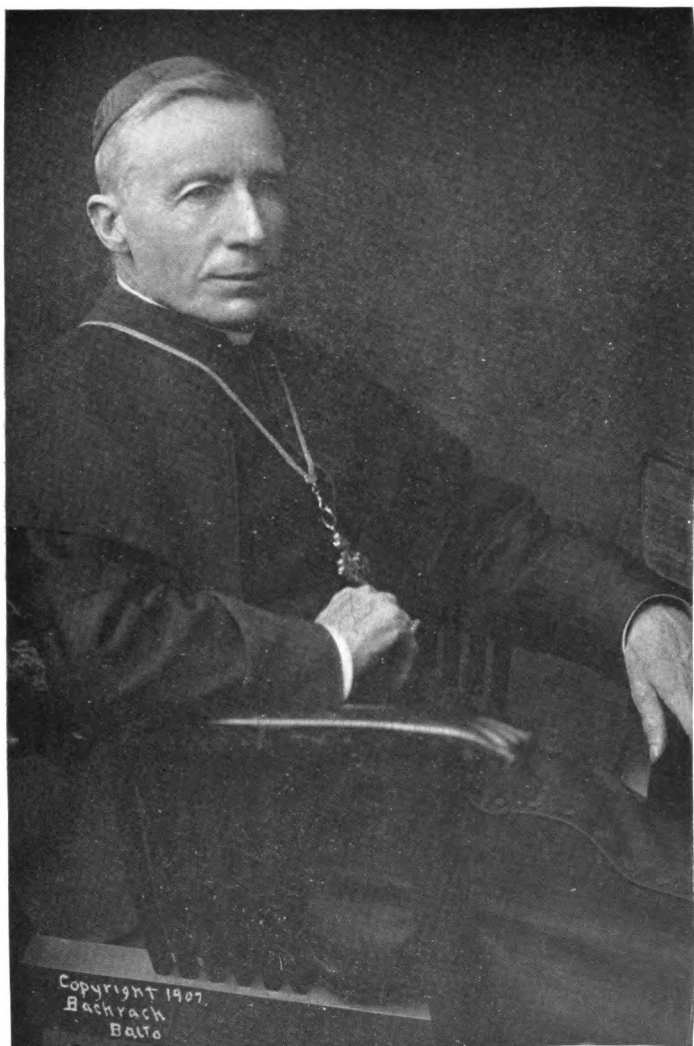
## FATHER TABB

and made his final decision in May 1872, when he was baptized into the church of his adoption.

This radical change on the part of Mr. Curtis had a strong influence on the mind and heart of his young disciple who followed his course with the most intense interest, and when Mr. Curtis, soon after his return from Europe, entered St. Mary's Seminary to prepare for the priesthood, John Tabb (who had also been prayerfully studying and considering the same step) soon followed his example and in less than a year identified himself with the Catholic Church.

On the day of Father Curtis' ordination (December 19, 1874) he heard his first confession, and the penitent was his old friend and disciple, John Tabb.

The biographer of Bishop Curtis speaks thus of their relations: "They had been the closest of friends; and years after, when Father Curtis became Bishop of Wilmington, he regularly visited his friend, often walking the five miles from the railroad station to St. Charles College. Bishop Curtis was his consoling angel in the hour of his greatest trial and darkness, when threatened with the loss of sight. Together they took long walks through the country, recreating each other and exchanging reminiscences, one submitting to the criticism of his friend his latest verses, while the other cheered him by his encouragement. He sent the poet kind and loving messages from his deathbed and bequeathed



HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL GIBBONS





## EARLY MANHOOD AND CONVERSION

to him his chalice. Bishop Curtis died July 11, 1908, only sixteen months before his friend."

In 1874 John Tabb entered St. Charles College to take up his preparation for the priesthood. Upon the completion of his classical course he was given the chair of English in that institution and remained there until his death in 1909.

He took his theological course while a member of the Faculty and was not ordained to the priesthood until 1884. His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons, was a close friend of the young teacher and had the rather unique privilege of administering to him in one day, at old St. Peter's Cathedral in Richmond, Virginia, the four sacraments: Baptism, Confession, Confirmation and the Holy Communion. Later his Eminence also gave him Holy Orders.

Many years after, in playful mood, he asked the Cardinal for further spiritual honors—his sight was almost gone at the time and his old friend Bishop Curtis in taking leave of him asked if he could take any message to Cardinal Gibbons. Father Tabb promptly replied: "Yes, ask him to give me a new 'See'".

The above incident was related to the writer by His Eminence himself.

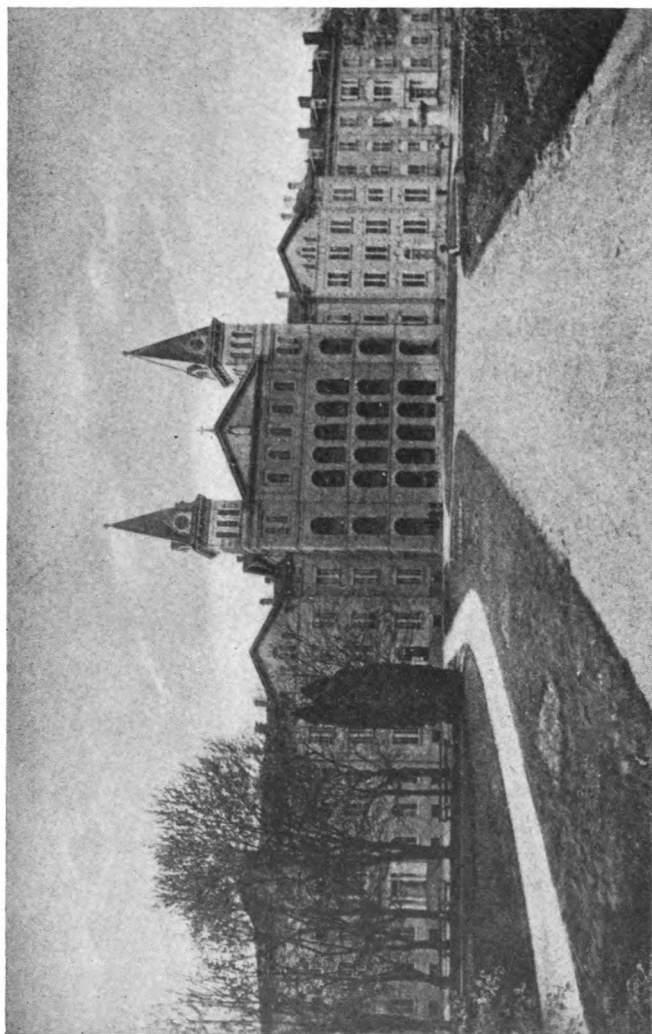
## CHAPTER V

### THE TEACHER

John Bannister Tabb was a born teacher and consequently rejoiced in his work which was truly "a labor of love." He was an unusually fine Greek scholar and delighted in teaching special classes in this language; he had a wonderful memory and often recited for his pupils long passages from the Greek poets. His preference, however, was for English and his class hour was eagerly awaited by his students. One of these, Rev. F. Jos. Magri, M. A., D. D., formerly of Richmond, Virginia, now pastor of St. Paul's Church, Portsmouth, Virginia, gives the following interesting sketch of him at St. Charles College:

"The reminiscences which follow are intended to picture Father Tabb as he appeared to the writer during a close friendship of twenty-one years, continuing to the time of the poet-priest's death. An effort will be made to portray characteristic incidents in his life both within the college walls, where he spent a great portion of his days, as well as in the outside world during his vacations, passed principally under the bright skies of his dear Old Virginia.

"In order completely to depict Father Tabb in his wellrounded life at St. Charles College let us view him



ST. CHARLES COLLEGE, BURNED IN 1911



## THE TEACHER

(1) in the classroom and study hall, (2) at his recreation and (3) in his priestly devotions."

These different phases of his life we will follow — quoting Dr. Magri as each is touched upon.

"That Father Tabb was a born teacher, gifted with the essential trait of being able to impart easily his knowledge to others, is vouched for by all who had the good fortune to come under his kindly tutelage. His "Bone Rules of English Grammar" are, to say the least, unique, and form a solid groundwork on which to firmly rear the superstructure of the English language. His method of arousing the attention of his students was striking; in order to impart with effect some important truth, he would often preface his teaching by the narration of some comic story or witty saying. A roar of laughter emanating from Father Tabb's classroom would indicate to the students of other classes that he had just effectively narrated some amusing experience or illustration; his peculiar gestures and grimaces, while giving vent to his witty sayings, would often provoke as much laughter as the sayings themselves. Often his jokes were so deep that the students did not immediately see the point aimed at, yet a spontaneous burst of merriment would greet the narration, followed by a second peal when the telling point would be discovered. As a sample of his wit, the following is given as heard from Father Tabb's lips on the day of the writer's arrival at college: "In a certain family wherein was an old negro Mammy, were little twin girls so much alike that

## FATHER TABB

it was difficult to distinguish them apart. The Mammy, however, was very partial to one of them and, when visitors would remark that the little girls were exactly alike, Mammy, placing her hand on the head of her favorite, would add: "An' especially *this* one."

"While Father Tabb would enlighten and entertain his pupils by frequent readings from the poets, and occasional selections from prose, he would never consent to teach poetry as such. One day when asked why he refused to teach the class in poetry, he replied: "Did I teach poetry I would feel like a surgeon who might try to dissect himself."

This refusal, however, did not apply to his giving his pupils for study and analysis specimens from the poets of his choice, the principal being Shakespeare, Poe, Keats, Shelly, Coleridge, and Tennyson. He would each year recite to his class from memory, Poe's "Raven" from beginning to end. His love for the weird and strange is shown by his frequent references to Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." His favorite prose author was Cardinal Newman. Poe, he regarded as the originator and greatest master of the short story."

But the work of his class was not all so entertaining; half of each recitation period was given up to drill, and his wonderful gift for illustration was often brought into play in his blackboard work.

He was a strong disciplinarian and brooked no show

## THE TEACHER

of inattention or lack of interest in the work in hand. Sometimes, too, he gave way to a just indignation at such an attitude in a pupil. A prominent priest of Virginia states that on one occasion he had painful proof of the fact that Father Tabb demanded the full attention of the boys in his classes. He says: "The fact that I was a Virginian gave the priest a special interest in my welfare but on one occasion this interest was manifested in a way that left an indelible impression on my mind and almost as strong an impression on my cranium. It happened that I became absorbed in "David Copperfield" and took it to Father Tabb's class in order to read a few pages. It was not long before I was discovered, the book satched from my hand and brought down on my head in no gentle fashion — and the lecture then and there, supplemented by a heart to heart talk after class, entirely cured me of any inclination to distractions in class."

Father Tabb's "Bone Rules, or the Skeleton of English Grammar" was first published in 1897 and clearly demonstrates his method of teaching. The dedication of the volume is as follows:

"Inscribed to my Pupils, Active and Passive, Perfect and Imperfect, Past, Present and Future, by their loving Father Tabb."

In a presentation copy he added to the above: "In whatever Mood they may be," and wrote beneath the dedication:

## FATHER TABB

### "EPITAPH SUGGESTED BY THE AUTHOR

Here lies the old fool  
Who erstwhile taught school  
And wrote the Bone Rule:  
O God, keep him cool!"

A critic says of this volume: "The brevity and clearness which mark every page, the pithy explanatory notes, the copious quotations from the masters of English literature, and even the comic procession of 'Sentences to be Corrected,' many of them Father Tabb's own creation, render 'Bone Rules' an easy and helpful manner of studying grammar."

Some of the parenthetical remarks in this volume are most amusing; for instance, after his treatment of "Verbs" he adds as a footnote: "Remark: *Any* word may be used as a verb; as, 'it out-herods Herod.' "

"You *head* the list;  
I *hand* the quill;  
And *toe* the mark,  
And *foot* the bill."

He had a unique way of impressing facts by means of rhymes: at the end of the chapters on Adjectives and Adverbs he gives the following:

"To bodies, *color*, *shape* and *size*  
And *weight* the adjective supplies;



## THE TEACHER

And gives to things we cannot see  
Their *rank*, and *worth*, and *quality*."

and again

"The *time*, the *place*, or *whither*, *whence*;  
The manner *how*, the reason *why*:  
The *purpose*, *cause*, and *consequence*  
The adverb can alone supply."

Reference has been made to Father Tabb's "comic procession of sentences to be corrected." Among the best of the original ones are:

"Them that was foremost in making the fuss  
Is as old, and a hundred times meaner than us."

He said if I seen you before it was took,  
To tell you the physic had ought to be shook.

My friend is as old and more abler than me,  
And if he lives longer, a bishop he'll be.

The child had laid so long in bed,  
Expecting to get stronger,  
That ere I seen him he had grew  
Most fifteen inches longer.

Him and me being about the same height,  
Is often mistook for each other at night,  
But the sun having rose, on our features to shine,  
You can see that his eyes is some littler than mine.

## FATHER TABB

"Lay still," his mother often said  
When Washington had went to bed.  
But little Georgie would reply:  
'I set up, but I cannot lie!' "

The drill work, the technical part of the lesson, having been disposed of, Father Tabb, much to the delight of his classes, turned to the poets, and many charming hours were spent with Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats and Poe—the latter being, perhaps, the favorite.

Mr. S. D. Duggan, a gifted student of the poet, writes: "We ran with him through the gamut of 'The Bells,' from the riotous roar to the softest tintinabulations. And even the most apathetic was forced to wipe away a tear at realizing the full sadness of the untimely taking off of 'that rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.' Toward the end of one session the teacher went to one corner of the classroom, crouched, and began to recite 'The Skylark.' The students were transfixed. When he had finished, he was on tiptoe at the opposite corner of the room, breathless, as if eager to follow the bird in its flight. Instinctively the class broke into tumultuous applause. He modestly repressed our enthusiasm with the remark: 'Gentlemen, did you see that skylark soar? did you hear him sing? If there is a single boy in this class who did not see that bird and hear him, I forbid him ever again to open a book of poetry, for it would be sheer waste of time.' "

## THE TEACHER

"Need it be said that most of those present saw the bird and heard him sing?"

Father Tabb's love for Poe, Keats and Shelly is best exemplified, I think, by the following beautiful tributes from his pen :

### POE

Sad spirit, swathed in brief mortality,  
Of Fate and fervid fantasies the prey,  
Till the remorseless demon of dismay  
O'erwhelmed thee — lo! thy doleful destiny  
Is chanted in the requiem of the sea  
And shadowed in the crumbling ruins grey  
That beetle o'er the tarn. Here all the day  
The Raven broods on solitude and thee;  
Here gloats the moon at midnight, while The Bells  
Tremble, but speak not, lest thy Ulalume  
Should startle from her slumbers, or Lenore  
Harken the love-forbidden tone that tells  
The shrouded legend of thy early doom  
And blast the bliss of heaven for evermore.

### AT KEATS' GRAVE

"I feel the flowers growing over me."  
Prophetic thought! Behold, no cypress gloom  
Portrays in dim memorial the doom  
That quenched the ray of starlike destiny!  
E'en Death itself deals tenderly with thee:  
For here, the livelong year, the violets bloom

## FATHER TABB

And swing their fragrant censers till the tomb  
Forgets the legend of mortality.  
Nay : when the pilgrim periods of time  
Alternate song and holy requiem sing,  
As through the circling centuries sublime  
They scatter frost, or genial sunshine bring,  
With gathered sweets of every varying clime,  
They weave around thee one perpetual Spring!

## SHELLEY

Shelley, the ceaseless music of thy soul  
Breathes in the Cloud and in the Skylark's song,  
That float as an embodied dream along  
The dewy lids of morning. In the dole  
That haunts the West Wind, in the joyous roll  
Of Arethusan fountains, or among  
The wastes where Ozymandias the strong  
Lies in colossal ruin, thy control  
Speaks in the wedded rhyme. Thy spirit gave  
A fragrance to all nature, and a tone  
To inexpressive silence. Each apart —  
Earth, Air and Ocean — claims thee as its own ;  
The twain that bred thee and the panting wave  
That clasped thee, like an overflowing heart.

## TO SHELLEY

At Shelley's birth,  
The Lark, dawn-spirit, with an anthem loud,  
Rose from the dusky earth

## THE TEACHER

To tell it to the Cloud,  
That, like a flower night-folded in the gloom  
Burst into morning bloom.

At Shelley's death  
The Sea, that deemed him an immortal, saw  
A god's extinguished breath,  
And landward, as in awe,  
Upbore him to the altar whence he came,  
And the rekindling flame.

## KEATS

Upon thy tomb 'tis graven, "Here lies one  
Whose name is writ in water." Could there be  
A flight of fancy fitlier framed for thee,  
A fairer motto for her favorite son?  
For, as the waves, thy varying numbers run —  
Now crested proud in tidal majesty,  
Now tranquil as the twilight revery  
Of some dim lake the white moon looks upon  
While teems the world with silence. Even there  
In each Protean rainbow tint that stains  
The breathing canvas of the atmosphere,  
We read an exhalation of thy strains.  
Thus, on the scroll of Nature, everywhere,  
Thy name, a deathless syllable, remains.

## POE-CHOPIN

O'er each the soul of Beauty flung  
A shadow, mingled with the breath  
Of music that the Sirens sung,  
Whose utterance is death.

## FATHER TABB

### KEATS-SAPPHO

Methinks when first the nightingale  
Was mated to thy deathless song,  
That Sappho, with emotion pale,  
Amid the Olympian throng,  
Stood listening with lips apart,  
To hear in thy melodious love  
The pantings of her heart.

### POE'S CRITICS

A certain tyrant, to disgrace  
The more a rebel's resting place,  
Compelled the people, every one,  
To hurl, in passing there, a stone;  
Which done, the rugged pile became  
A sepulcher, to keep the name.  
And thus it is with Edgar Poe:  
Each passing critic has his throw,  
Nor sees, defeating his intent,  
How lofty grows the monument!

Father Tabb's own critics were sometimes favored (?) with the same kind of attention and so clever were some of these hits that when "Quips and Quiddits" appeared in 1907, the publishers, Small, Maynard & Company, of Boston, collected a number

## THE TEACHER

of them and inserted them with the following note as preface:

“A few verses by way of introduction, in which the author gets even with his critics, his publishers, and those who trifle with his name—from which latter failing he himself does not seem exempt.”

Among the best of these verses are the following:

### “ON THE COVER OF JOHN B. TABB’S LATE LONDON VOLUME

His eyes are dim;  
And so for him,  
They thought in London ’twas enough  
To bind his book in blind-man’s buff!”

### TO MR. ANDREW LANG, WHO SPELLED MY NAME ‘TAB’

O why should Old Lang Sign  
A compliment to me,  
(If it indeed be mine)  
And filch my final b?

To him as to the Dane  
In his soliloquy,  
This question comes again,—  
‘2b or not 2b?’ ”

Father Tabb always impressed strongly upon his students a love for the doctrines and discipline of the

## FATHER TABB

Church, but once he remarked in class that if he should die before his ordination he would like his epitaph to read: "Sacred to the memory of John B. Tabb, D. D." When reminded by a member of the class that he was not yet a Doctor of Divinity, he replied: "D. D. will not mean Doctor of Divinity on *my* tombstone, it will mean Died of Dogma."

He had a great distaste for mathematics and would never admit that he could even add. The following he says, is "the only geometrical thought I ever had and it shows all I know of the science of angles:

Suspended o'er Geometry  
I am a fisher-woman, dangling —  
A creature too obtuse to know  
What is acute in angling."

One of his critics says: "He had the faculty of genius in calling out latent talent in his students, which he fostered with generous and unremitting care. Indeed, he was ever at their service, in class or out of class."

Another says: "He possessed rare ability, both to fix the attention of his students and to rivet in individual minds the facts he wished to impress. His methods of teaching were original and the means used were indifferent to him if in the end the fact was indelibly impressed upon the student's memory; a comic story, a limerick, a pun, a humorous illustration on the blackboard — for the priest was gifted with



## THE TEACHER

pencil as with pen — all were quickly utilized as a means to a desired end. No lesson was ever presented twice in the same way, and there was nothing in which he delighted more than in grounding the young student in the elements, or as he termed them the 'bones' of English grammar. It would be difficult to find an instructor better fitted for the task, and it was a dull student indeed who did not make rapid progress under his inspiring instruction. 'Boys,' he once remarked in the calssroom, 'I don't care how ridiculous a thing is if by it I can teach you something you ought to know.'

"Thoroughly familiar with the classics, scarcely a day passed that the instructor did not devote some portion of it to Greek and Latin authors — especially the poets. Often he read one of these ancient masterpieces to his class, and new significance and beauty were evoked by the strength and intelligence of his interpretation. After Shakespeare, his favorite English authors were Tennyson, Keats and Shelley. He had a fondness also for Coleridge, whose 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' he frequently read to his students with a dramatic effect difficult to surpass. His appreciation of Poe was deep and sincere, and the words of the poets he loved were close to him as his own thoughts. Often he quoted from the English poets at great length without any reference to the text."

## CHAPTER VI

### OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Returning to Father Magri's sketch we shall next see Father Tabb pictured in the study hall and at his recreation.

"During certain hours he presided in place of the prefect of discipline. It was his invariable custom while 'keeping study' to walk up and down the centre aisle with a small book in his hand, on which rested a sheet of paper whereon he would from time to time jot down some poetic thought, or draw a cartoon of some well known individual, which latter he would show to different students as he passed along beside their desks. Sometimes the drawing would be of so comical a nature that the student, on beholding it, would disturb the whole study hall by his irrepressible laughter; after which Father Tabb would, with mock solemnity, place a finger on his lips in token of silence and, in affected majesty, continue his walk up and down the room. This assumed manner, so unnatural to him, would often provoke more laughter, until he signalled with his hand that he wished the spirit of mirth to end.

Rev. T. A. Rankin of Charlottesville, Virginia, relates that: "Father Tabb was habitually making

## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

puns, some rather far-fetched, on every conceivable subject. Nearly every thing he said evoked a smile. A classmate of mine, I remember, always greeted these witticisms with a hearty laugh — whether he understood the point or not. One evening while Father Tabb was in charge of the study hall and was going along the aisles, stopping occasionally to speak a word of encouragement or to spring a pun that had just occurred to his fertile mind, he stopped at the afore-said student's desk and asked him a serious question in a low tone of voice. The young man, thinking it was a joke and that he was expected to laugh, broke out in a loud ha-ha, much to Father Tabb's disgust. Never again was he favored with a *bon mot*."

While walking back and forth along the aisles of the study hall, lost in thought or dreaming his poet dreams, it was the priest's frequent custom to pause at the west windows of the room and stand gazing out. The trees at various seasons, the alluring tints of the clouds, the placid bosom of the lake, the flowers that were visible from this point of vantage — all attracted his attention. A number of his poems were written during these study hours and others were inspired by some object that caught his eye as he paused at the windows of the hall.

## THE LAKE

I am a lonely woodland lake.

The trees that round me grow,

[41]

## FATHER TABB

The glimpse of heaven above me, make  
The sum of all I know.

The mirror of their dreams to be  
Alike in shade and shine,  
To clasp in Love's captivity,  
And keep them one — is mine.

This refers to a lake in the college grounds which was excavated by a member of the Faculty, Father Vuibert, Vice-President of the College. This lake was in plain view from the study hall windows and Father Tabb delighted to watch, especially at the twilight time, the changing surface of the waters and the play of light and shade upon them.

Other gems jotted down at this time are: "Indian Summer," which was suggested to the poet by the gorgeous tints of a red gum tree outside the window; "Winter Twilight," "Joy," and the widely known "Fern Song" — probably the most frequently quoted of all his poems. The little fern that inspired this beautiful thought stood in the window of the study hall and while gazing out, on a dark, rainy day, the priest noticed the rhythmical, dancing motion of the little leaves and gave to the world this charming exponent of his own bright optimism, which always led him to look for a lesson of cheer in any circumstance, however dark. While bearing to us a message straight from his nature-loving heart, the little song is so dainty and has such charm in its rhythm that it grips

## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

the mind and heart and sings itself over and over to all who read it—the very embodiment of cheerfulness.

### FERN SONG

Dance to the beat of the rain, little fern,  
And spread out your palms again,  
And say, "Tho' the sun  
Hath my vesture spun,  
He had labored, alas, in vain  
But for the shade  
That the cloud hath made,  
And the gift of the dew and the rain."  
Then laugh and upturn  
All your fronds, little fern,  
And rejoice in the beat of the rain.

Father Tabb loved to be with the students, and when he appeared on the campus they hailed him with delight, and he was always made the central figure in a group of joyous youngsters who idolized him . . . recognizing and realizing the deep and lasting affection that he felt for them. It is said at the school that those who knew him best were unable to tell which was greater, his heart or his genius — both seemed boundless.

An inveterate punster, many of his boys claimed that he arose each morning with an entirely new set of witticisms, and his progress through the college refectory at breakfast was enlivened by his humorous oddities which left peals of laughter in his wake. His

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fun was without tinge of bitterness or irony and his brilliant flashes left neither cut nor sting. The merriment which he aroused was as the sunshine — pure and sweet; and those who eagerly crowded round him were secure from any fear that his shafts would cause a heartache or leave a wound, however slight.

He often joined the students in their walks, when he would at times express himself with the artlessness of a child; then he would burst forth in a torrent of witty sayings that marked the man and the thinker.

Naturally shy and reserved, he avoided whenever possible any public gatherings or meetings with strangers; and this shyness increased rather than diminished with his ripening years. He used to say that there was nobody in the world that he hadn't seen that he wanted to see. That he did not want to meet any more people than he knew already.

When illustrious dignitaries came to the college to celebrate some feast day or other event, "Father Tabb would steal off to the hills and the dales, to hold sweet converse with nature and to gather material for his immortal verse; as has been said of other great men — he was never so little alone as when alone."

On the eve of the Feast of St. Charles he could always be seen trudging the six miles down the pike to Ellicott City in order to escape the swarm of visitors who always descended upon the college on that occasion.

I am indebted to M. S. Pine (Sister Mary Paulina) for the following anecdotes: "One day Father Tabb

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was particularly requested to be on hand to help entertain four bishops who were hourly expected. The smile on his face could not be misinterpreted. He was soon out of sight in his beloved haunts in the woods, where he spent the day. As the whistle told him late in the afternoon that the guests had departed, he sauntered back to the College. On the way one of the Faculty met him and asked: 'Why didn't you stay and see the Bishops?' 'I didn't want to meet my forefathers, (four Fathers)' was the witty rejoinder.

"In the same spirit of distaste for great functions, he later declined an invitation of the Reverend Father (now Monsignor) Mackin of Washington, to be present at the laying of the corner-stone of St. Paul's Church, of which Father Mackin was Pastor. Here are Father Tabb's regrets:

St. Peter is the corner-stone,  
And if you build on Paul,  
I greatly fear  
Ere many a year  
Your Church is doomed to fall.  
So pray excuse  
If I refuse  
To heed your invitation,  
Or have no heart  
To take a part  
In such a Mackin-ation."

Bishop O'Connell of Richmond, Virginia, relates the following incident: When Bishop Foley of Michi-

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gan was the guest of His Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons, the two were invited to dine at St. Charles College. Father Tabb was asked to write the invitation, which he did, thus:

“Dear Cardinal Gibbons:  
With all your red ribbons,  
Pray lend us the light of your face;  
And bring with you Holy  
John Michigan Foley  
(Who hopes some day to be in your place).”

In his younger days Father Tabb attended the funeral of an old gentleman who was known to have led rather a wild life; this was before the use of the padded top to the casket, and to avoid the hollow sound of the clods falling into the open grave, a quantity of shavings were placed upon the top of the case. Someone standing behind him leaned over his shoulder and whispered: “Mr. Tabb, what’s all that they’re putting in?” Without an instant’s hesitation or the least change of expression, he replied: “Kindling!”

Upon an other occasion he was visiting a friend in a hospital. A patient was to be operated upon but was anxious to see a priest before being taken to the operating room. Knowing that Father Tabb was in the house, one of the physicians asked if he would be willing to see the lady. He said that certainly he would do whatever he could and that he thought it





This is the Catholic priest  
who in piety never increased.  
With his words & his deeds  
He kept on a level,  
Tho' from flesh he was wholly re-  
leased.

John B. Tabb.



## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

most fitting "that the old lady be opened with prayer."

In appearance Father Tabb was slender of figure, slightly above medium height, homely of face, with strong, prominent features. On one occasion, passing a stranger on the streets of Baltimore he stopped, held out his hand and said, with a twinkle in his eye: "How do you do, friend; until I met you I thought I was the *ugliest* man alive!" Needless to say that the other took no offense.

The autograph cartoon of himself, given to the writer by Sister Mary Paulina of the Georgetown Convent of the Visitation, he sent to a friend whom he had never seen, but who was a great admirer of his genius as a writer. He said: "To disabuse your notion of the 'poet,' I sent you a matter-of-fact presentment of the 'man' who is aways, dear——, Your Servant in Christ, John B. Tabb." Below the cartoon was written:

This is the Catholic Priest  
Who in piety never increased.  
With the world and the devil  
He kept on a level,  
But from *flesh* he was wholly released!

At one time when in great poverty, Father Tabb sold a poem "The Cloud" to Harper's Magazine for the sum of fifteen dollars; with this amount he purchased a pair of shoes and other necessities and then wrote the following:

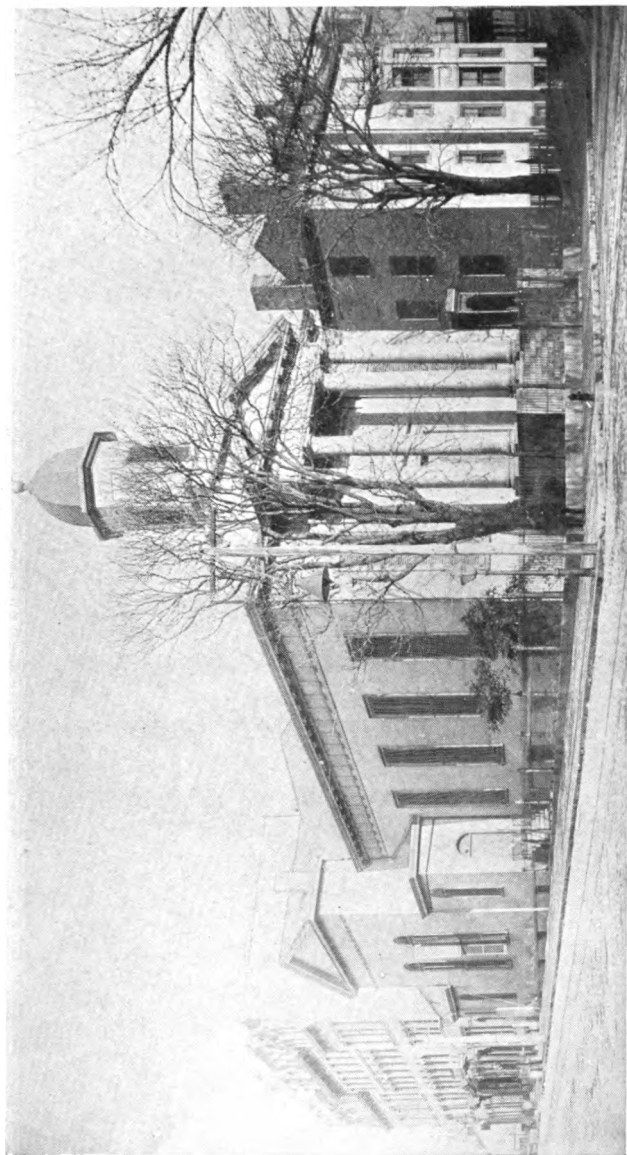
## FATHER TABB

One day with feet upon the ground  
I stood among the crowd:  
The next, with *sole* renewed, I found  
A footing on "The Cloud!"

"The Cloud" was later published in his poems which came out in 1894 and is one of his longest productions, containing eight four-line stanzas.

At the time of Father Tabb's death a writer in the Baltimore Sun said of him: "In manner he was cordially responsive or shy and reserved, according to his degree of intimacy with those with whom he was associated. About Ellicott City his face and figure were familiar to the entire community. Not only the boys of St. Charles College but those of Rock Hill College and those of Ellicott City were his ardent admirers and close friends. A resident of that town speaking of him says: "A boy, a genuine boy was Father Tabb! And the stories he could tell! There was never any trouble in finding a stable boy to drive Father Tabb out to the college!" This same gentleman also cited many instances of the priest's goodness and generosity — telling of cases where he had helped needy boys, of many a pair of shoes that found their way in secret to barefoot lads, and of clothes smuggled to those in need of them.

"Half way between Ellicott City and St. Charles College resided some Virginia friends of Father Tabb and their home was for many years an almost daily interlude in the priest's long walks about the country."



ST. PETER'S CHURCH, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA



## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Here, and in the homes of a few other families, the poet came and went as the mood impelled him. Always a welcome guest, he here cast aside reserve and was frankly interested in the affairs of the day, ready to discuss with boyish enthusiasm topics light or serious, the last novel, the last drama—for he now and again attended a good play—an inspiring concert, or the affairs of the nation. But from strangers, denizens of the outer world, Father Tabb fled as does the wild deer, to the forests. Social gatherings always found him like Bill Nye's ghost, 'of an unsociable disposition and always going the other way.' "

Dr. Magri says: "He loved his friends with all the ardour and intensity of his generous soul. To him friendship was something eternal; this may explain why he would never bid goodbye to his friends and why he would almost feel offended did one of them say goodbye to him—even though in body absent, his friends were in spirit constantly with him, then why goodbye? It has been said (and likely with truth) that no one ever saw him departing from the college for his summer vacation; several days before the annual commencement his room would be found vacant—the bird had flown with no goodbye, no sad parting."

Another peculiarity exhibited by Father Tabb along the same line was his aversion to ever seeing again a young man whom he had loved as a youth. A lawyer in Washington who, when at St. Charles, was very intimate with Father Tabb, asked him to come and pay

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him a visit, but no — Father Tabb wished to remember him as the *boy* he had loved, and not to know him as the successful lawyer. In response to the invitation the priest sent the following:

### ALTER IDEM

'Tis what thou wast — *not* what thou art,  
Which I no longer know —  
That made thee sovereign of my heart,  
And serves to keep thee so.

And couldst thou, coming to the throne,  
Thy Self, *unaltered*, see,  
Thou mightst the occupant disown  
And scout his sovereignty!

“At the beginning and end of each summer vacation,” quoting again from Dr. Magri, “it was the custom of Father Tabb to spend several days with the Bishop and with the priests at St. Peter’s old Cathedral Rectory (Richmond, Virginia). We priests looked eagerly for his coming, which had the effect of a refreshing breeze. We all felt spiritually invigorated by personal contact with a man so truly great, who endeavored to hide his greatness under the cloak of simplicity and even drollery. Arriving at a house, after having earnestly inquired after the health of each one, Father Tabb would proceed forthwith to what he regarded as a prime duty to his friends, that of putting them or keeping them in a good humor by



## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

the narration of a series of jokes so original, so apt and so pointed, as to convulse his auditors with laughter and, at the same time, excite their wonder. His friends, especially in Baltimore, Richmond and other parts of Maryland and Virginia, were numerous. These heartily welcomed him to their homes and looked for his visits with the keenest and most pleasurable anticipation."

When passing through Richmond Father Tabb always visited the old Westmoreland Club—that haunt, since ante-bellum days, of many of the most prominent sons of the Old Dominion. Upon one occasion someone spoke of "taking a smile"—the poet-priest immediately wrote the following:

"A MAN MAY SMILE AND SMILE AND BE A  
VILLAIN"

How far the lip below the nose

'Tis difficult to say,

But every indication shows

It'smiles, it'smiles away!

With my compliments to the Westmoreland Club.

This little verse, ornamented with a cartoon likeness of the author, still hangs in the Club; the accompanying facsimile was secured through the kindness of the late James C. Martin of Richmond.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MUSICIAN

Reference has already been made to Father Tabb's great talent and love for music—it had been almost an obsession with him since childhood. He had quite a reputation as a pianist, especially in Baltimore where, when released from his college duties, he would often perform for his friends.

It was his custom on bright holy days when the students were out of doors, to slip unobserved to the grand piano in the large recreation hall and play to his heart's content—usually some wierd strain. Here he was lost to the world around him, wholly absorbed in the wonderful melodies which he evoked. The students would often, at such times, watch him from a distance; as he appeared to lose all knowledge of his surroundings, with his fingers (modeled after those of Liszt) running rapidly over the keys, his long, gaunt body swaying with the melody. We may imagine that it was on such occasions as these, when repeating over and over again some soul-stirring strain, that there came to him his brightest poetic fancies. And often in the dusk of evening he would steal to the college music room where for hours he would fill the darkness with melody.



"A man may smile & smile & be  
a villain."

=

How far the lip below the nose

'Is very hard to say;

But every indication shows

It's smiles, it's smiles  
away."

John Galsworthy

with compliments to  
The Westmoreland Club.



## THE MUSICIAN

But his music was not all within the college walls; the ripple and charming lightness of his piano playing may be heard in many of his poems, and in others there is the full, tender minor strain so dear to his heart. At times he selected for some literary gem a musical theme and in his vivid imagination heard melodies that no common ear could discern.

Mr. Edwin Litchfield Turnbull who has made famous the "Melody from Lanier's Flute," also set to music several songs written by Father Tabb. In a letter dated November 24, 1915, he gave me a gem from the poet's pen, "Somewhere," that has never been published. The original was sent to Mr. Turnbull who still has it in his possession. In writing of his friendship for Father Tabb, he says:

"Some time in 1887, as a small boy editor of a tiny amateur journal called 'The Acorn,' I first made the acquaintance of that rare and sunny nature in whose heart there was always a particular soft spot for boys.

"At the time Father Tabb was engaged in coaxing Latin Grammar into boys at St. Charles College, in Ellicott City. Would that it had been my privilege to study Latin under such auspices and to hear some of those lessons, sparkling with a quaint whimsical humor for which the poet-priest was famous.

"His first contribution to 'The Acorn' was an exquisite little poem 'The Reaper,' for which I later composed a musical setting; and then began

## FATHER TABB

a delightful friendship, lasting over many years. I tried my hand at other verses of his, 'One April Morn' and 'Lullaby Town,' and always looked forward with keen delight to visits from the author. Whenever the slim, shy figure in priestly garb appeared in my office doorway I knew that a rare treat was in store for me, and business was speedily forgotten while Father Tabb talked of our songs, or his Latin Grammar, or Sidney Lanier; his sprightly conversation interspersed with inimitable jokes, which I often begged him to send to comic papers. He could have made a fortune writing for 'Life' or 'Puck.'

"It was on the occasion of one of these visits to my office that he spoke of the quaint melody which Lanier played in prison, and which through the many years since had haunted his memory. I almost had to drag him to a nearby music store, where I got a piano and took down the air as Father Tabb gave it to me from memory, long years after those prison days which Lanier's velvet-toned flute had cheered and softened.

"Sometimes I had a characteristic note from him like this:

St. Charles College,  
Ellicott City, Md.  
December 9, 1899.

Dear Edwin:

I herewith send you the promised lines, which I

## THE MUSICIAN

hope you may wed to some eligible air, if you find  
them worth using. Ever yours,

Lovingly,

JOHN B. TABB.

Here followed the lines:

### "SOMEWHERE

'Somewhere beneath the blinding snows —  
A smouldering senser, burns my rose;  
But Love alone the secret knows  
Till Spring appear.

Somewhere in unimagined deeps,  
My star, a radiant dreamer, sleeps;  
But Love alone the secret knows,  
Till Night is near."

"And on another visit he handed me a faded, yellow MS bearing the title 'Genevieve,' saying it had lain for a score of years in a drawer in his desk, and that I might have it put to music. I have often wondered since if 'Genevieve' were a romantic chapter out of the poet's own life, or does it refer to Coleridge's famous poem of that name?

"That Father Tabb's beautiful soul was brimming over with music must be evident to all who read the exquisite lyric gems he has left behind. There is music in every line of verse that he wrote. I am

## FATHER TABB

more grateful than I can say, for the rich privilege accorded me of his friendship. I can appreciate now much more than I did in those days of boyish enthusiasm how much the friendship has meant to me.

May Father Tabb's influence for the nobler things of life grow sweeter as the years pass."

In speaking of his great love for music, one of Father Tabb's pupils says that if on the weekly holiday he did not go to Baltimore one would be sure to find him at the piano in the Recreation Hall indulging his passion for classical music. His favorite song was The Earl King, which he even attempted to sing in his thin piping voice. When seated at the piano he completely lost himself in rapture and frequently declared that no musical instrument could excel the human voice, and that his greatest pleasure was grand opera well rendered.

He abhorred the modern rag-time and would leave the room if any one began to play this class of music. Soon after the pianola was invented the Pastor of a neighboring parish gave a musicale at the college. In deference to Father Tabb, he began with a classical selection — played in a most mechanical way; but the piece was hardly begun when the old priest sprang to his feet, rushed to the pianola, and ordered him to stop. "You are butchering it," he cried, "let me beat the time for you!" He began to indicate the time, waving his arm, but the operator was utterly unable to follow him and after a few measures Father Tabb left the hall in disgust, vow-



## THE MUSICIAN

ing that if it were in his power he would break up every such instrument that robbed music of its very soul.

“The Reaper” which was set to music by Mr. Turnbull was very popular as a song and was particularly admired by Dr. Garnett of the British Museum in London.

## THE REAPER

Tell me whither, Maiden June,  
Down the dusky slope of noon  
With thy sickle of a moon,  
Goest thou to reap?

Fields of Fancy by the stream  
Of Night, in silvery silence gleam,  
To heap with many a harvest-dream  
The Granary of Sleep.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WRITER OF CHILD VERSE

Father Tabb was a great lover of children and on his trips through Richmond always made an effort to be there on Sunday morning for the children's Mass at nine o'clock. He never seemed happier than when addressing them, and he had the rare faculty of viewing the subjects handled on such occasions from the child's standpoint. When in the presence of children he seemed literally to become one of them; his unaffected simplicity of character made one feel that he must have been dear to the heart of Him who said: "Unless ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

His volume of *Child-Verse*, published in 1900, teems with wit and humor and sets a-peal the merry bells of childish laughter; some of his fancies are unique indeed and he makes capital of the most unusual material, but through all of the little poems shines the kindly light of his sunny nature. I give below some of the most widely known.

#### THE BLUEBIRD

When God had made a host of them,  
One little flower still lacked a stem

## THE WRITER OF CHILD VERSE

To bear its blossom blue;  
So into it he breathed a song  
And suddenly, with petals strong  
As wings, away it flew!

## THE TAX-GATHERER

“And pray, who are you?”  
Said the violet blue  
To the Bee, with surprise  
At his wonderful size  
In her eye-glass of dew.

“I, madam,” quoth he,  
“Am a publican Bee,  
Collecting the tax  
Of honey and wax.  
Have you nothing for me?”

## A LEGACY

Do you remember, little cloud,  
This morning when you lay —  
A mist along the river —  
What the waters had to say?

And how the many-colored flowers  
That on the margin grew,  
All promised when the day was done  
To leave their tints to you?

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### AMID THE ROSES

There was laughter 'mid the roses  
For it was their natal day;  
And the children in the garden were  
As light of heart as they.

There were sighs amid the roses,  
For the night was coming on;  
And the children — weary now of play —  
Were ready to be gone.

There are tears amid the roses,  
For the children are asleep;  
And the silence of the garden makes  
The lonely blossoms weep.

### BICYCLES! TRICYCLES!

Bicycles! Tricycles! Nay, to shun laughter,  
Tricycles first, and Bicycles after;  
For surely the buyer deserves but the worst  
Who would buy cycles, failing to try cycles first!

### HIGH AND LOW

A Boot and a Shoe and a Slipper  
Once lived in a Cobbler's Row:  
But the Boot and the Shoe  
Would have nothing to do  
With the Slipper, because she was low.

## THE WRITER OF CHILD VERSE

But the King and the Queen and their Daughter  
On the Cobbler chanced to call:  
And as neither the Boot  
Nor the Shoe would suit,  
The Slipper went off to the ball.

## FROG-MAKING

Said Frog Papa to Frog Mama,  
"Where is our little daughter?"  
Said Frog Mama to Frog Papa,  
"She's underneath the water."

Then down the anxious father went,  
And there, indeed, he found her,  
A-tickling tadpoles, till they kicked  
Their tails off all around her!

## THE TRYST

Potato was deep in the dark underground,  
Tomato above in the light.  
The little tomato was ruddy and round,  
The little potato was white.  
And redder and redder she rounded above,  
And paler and paler he grew,  
And neither suspected a mutual love  
Till they met in a Brunswick Stew!

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## FATHER TABB

### THE END OF IT

A whole-tail dog and a half-tail dog,  
And a dog without any tail,  
Went all three out on an autumn day  
To follow a red-fox trail.

But the dogs that carried their tails along  
Fell out, it is said, by the way;  
And the loss of a tail and a half at the end  
Of the dogs, put an end to the fray.

When each, as a morsel sweet, gulped down  
What had late been a neighbor's pride,  
"You've kept your tails," laughed the no-tail dog,  
"But you wear them now *inside!*"

### A SPY

Sighed the languid Moon to the Morning Star:  
"O little Maid, how late you are!"  
"I couldn't rise from my couch," quoth she,  
"While the Man-in-the-Moon was looking at me."

### A LAMENT

"O Lady Cloud, why are you weeping?" I said.  
"Because," she made answer, "my rain-beau is  
dead."

## THE WRITER OF CHILD VERSE

### FOOT-SOLDIERS

'Tis all the way to Toe-Town,  
Beyond the Knee-high hill,  
That Baby has to travel down  
To see the soldiers drill.

One, two, three, four, five, a-row —  
A captain and his men —  
And on the other side, you know,  
Are six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

### THE TIME-BROOD

I wonder how the Mother-Hour  
Can feed each hungry Minute,  
And see that every one of them  
Gets sixty seconds in it;

And whether, when she goes abroad,  
She knows which ones attend her;  
For all of them are just alike  
In age and size and gender.

### PAINS-TAKING

"Take pains," growled the Tooth to the Dentist;  
"The same," said the Dentist, "to you."  
Then he added, "No doubt,  
Before you are out  
You'll have taken most pains of the two."

## FATHER TABB

Father Tabb's feeling for all children was deep and tender, but the purity and innocence of infancy drew forth some of his rarest gems of verse: Sister Mary Paulina says: "Judging from the alluring loveliness with which Babyhood sits enthroned in Father Tabb's poetic bower, crowned and circled by the rosebud vines of his delicate fancy and tender affection, I am inclined to believe that the poet-priest has found a part of his beautitude in the 'divine nurseries'—surely the 'Babe Niva' must have welcomed him there:

Niva, child of innocence,  
Dust to dust *we* go:  
Thou, when Winter wooed thee hence,  
Wentest snow to snow."

Other strikingly beautiful thoughts from his collection of poems on Babyhood are:

## AN IDOLATER

The Baby has no skies  
But Mother's eyes,  
Nor any God above  
But Mother's love.  
His angel sees the Father's face,  
But *he*, the Mother's, full of grace;  
And yet the heavenly kingdom is  
Of such as this.



## THE WRITER OF CHILD VERSE

### BABY

Baby in her slumber smiling,  
Doth a captive take:  
Whispers Love: "From dreams beguiling,  
May she never wake!"

When the lids, like mist retreating,  
Flee the azure deep,  
Wakes the new-born Joy, repeating:  
"May she never sleep!"

### A BUNCH OF ROSES

The rosy mouth and rosy toe  
Of little baby brother,  
Until about a month ago  
Had never met each other;  
But nowadays the neighbors sweet,  
In every sort of weather,  
Half way with rosy fingers meet,  
To kiss and play together.

## CHAPTER IX

### TABB AND LANIER

We have mentioned in a preceding chapter the close intimacy which grew out of Father Tabb's early association with Sidney Lanier; they were twin-souls — both musicians of a high order, both ranked among the foremost poets of the Southland, both teachers of English. The correspondence of the two poets is a literary treasure denied the world of letters. When Professor Edwin Mims published his life of Lanier he asked permission to use the correspondence, but it was the express wish of Father Tabb that he should not; afterward in the burning of St. Charles College, on March 16, 1911, all of Father Tabb's papers were destroyed.

He was not often in the Lanier home. During the lifetime of his friend, as in his later years, he seldom left the scene of his labors. Mrs. Mary Day Lanier, wife of the poet, writes as follows from her home in Greenwich, Conn., under date of March 15, 1915:

“Father Tabb was so voiceless about himself! And he was not much with us. When he was, poetry, music, the children, his friend — his David — were his themes. His brief letters to me from 1882 to his

## TABB AND LANIER

failing of vision more often than not enclosed an unpublished poem: sometimes craved my impression of it.

"I always loved these children of his fancy but often could not shape a thought in response to his tender need — for lack of nerve power."

In speaking of a little collection of Father Tabb's poems in her possession, she says: "These were bequeathed to me by my closest friend — also Mr. Lanier's — Miss Sarah Farley of Pennsylvania. She never met your uncle, she was a confirmed invalid, but through their common love for us and for all things sacred, a deep regard and tenderness grew up between them in a limited correspondence. Compassion for her suffering and solitariness also drew his warm heart towards her. She was a great soul and he leaned upon her in a certain way. Last June she was released at the age of seventy-six. You see how readily I could talk on to you of our common interest. Believe me

Very sincerely yours,

MARY DAY LANIER."

M. S. Pine (Sister Mary Paulina) in her beautiful critique on Father Tabb's poems thus contrasts his work and Sidney Lanier's:

"Their poetic styles are in remarkable contrast. Rich, magnificent, diffuse, Lanier rolls out his verse in great waves of song, and, while they are pervaded

## FATHER TABB

with a highly sensuous beauty and overflowing with human sympathies, here and there you encounter lofty conceptions of the greatness of God which bring you to your knees in worship and make manifest the secret of the bond that so welded Father Tabb's soul to his. But Father Tabb *moves* and *breathes* in the heavenly atmosphere—he would have everything in nature, in art, in life, bring us into closer relations with the Creator, with the Redeemer, with Heaven; he would sow a seed in our heart of faith heroic, of hope unfading, of love unutterable.”

An English critic says: “It is interesting to contrast the long, voluminous, rushing flow of Lanier with the minute, delicately carved work of his countryman. Which is the greater poet, let those who like giving marks decide; but Father Tabb, working within the limits which the nature of his art invariably determines, piping, so to speak, upon his flute, can do things which Lanier's great four-manual organ could never accomplish.”

Many of Father Tabb's poems refer to Sidney Lanier, and his first volume is dedicated thus:

### AVE: SIDNEY LANIER

Ere Time's horizon line was set,  
Somewhere in space our spirits met,  
Then o'er the starry parapet  
Came wandering here.

## TABB AND LANIER

And now that thou art gone again  
Beyond the verge, I haste amain  
(Lost echo of a loftier strain)  
To greet thee there.

The following gems of thought also bear reference to this beloved friend. For this we have Father Tabb's own statement, preserved for us by Father Perrig — of whom more anon.

## MY STAR

Since that the dewdrop holds the star  
The long night through,  
Perchance the satellite afar  
Reflects the dew.  
And while thine image in my heart  
Doth constant shine,  
There, haply, in thy heaven apart,  
Thou keepest mine.

## LOVE'S HYBLA

My thoughts fly to thee as the bees  
To find their favorite flower;  
Then home, with honeyed memories  
Of many a fragrant hour:

For with thee is the place apart,  
Where sunshine ever dwells;  
The Hybla, whence my hoarding heart  
Would fill its wintry cells.

## FATHER TABB

### TO SIDNEY LANIER

The dewdrop holds the heaven above  
Wherein the lark, unseen,  
Outpours a rhapsody of love  
That fills the space between.

My heart a dewdrop is, and thou,  
Dawn-spirit, far away,  
Fillest the void between us now  
With an immortal lay.

### ON THE FORTHCOMING VOLUME OF LANIER'S POEMS

Snow! Snow! Snow!  
Do thy worst, Winter, but know, but know,  
That when the Spring cometh a blossom shall blow  
From the heart of the poet, that sleeps below.  
And his name to the ends of the earth shall go,  
In spite of the snow!

### IN TOUCH

(Published from the MS by Dr. Browne)

How slight so e'er the motion be,  
With palpitating hand,  
The greatest breaker of the sea  
Betrays it to the land.  
And though a vaster mystery

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## TABB AND LANIER

Hath set our souls apart,  
Each wafture from eternity  
Betrays thee to my heart.

The poem "Robin" is generally supposed to have been inscribed to the little red-breast friend of Father Tabb, but not so—it was written and sent to Sidney Lanier's youngest son, Robin Lanier.

### ROBIN

Come to me, Robin, the daylight is dying!  
Come to me now!  
Come, ere the cypress-tree over me sighing,  
Dark with the shadow-tide circle my brow;  
Come, ere oblivion speed to me, flying  
Swifter than thou!

Come to me, Robin, the far echoes waken  
Cold to my cry!  
O! with the swallow-wing, love overtaken,  
Hence to the Echo-land, homeward, to fly!  
Thou art my life, Robin, Oh! love-forsaken,  
How can I die?

### AT LANIER'S GRAVE

I stand beneath the native tree  
That guards the spot where thou art laid:  
For since thy light is lost to me  
I loiter in the shade.

## FATHER TABB

I lean upon the rugged stone  
As on the breast from which I came,  
To learn 'tis not my heart alone  
That bears thy sacred name.

This beautiful tribute to his beloved Lanier was not published. It was taken by Father Perrig from the manuscript, and from his notes we learn that Lanier's favorite among Father Tabb's poems was

## THE SHADOW

O Shadow, in thy fleeing form I see  
The friend of fortune who once clung to me.  
In flattering light thy constancy is shown;  
In darkness, thou wilt leave me all alone.



## CHAPTER X

### THE POET

"Poetry is the blossoming and fragrance of all human knowledge, human thought, passions, emotions, language."—*Coleridge*.

Shelley defines poetry as "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds," and Longfellow says: "Beautiful are all the forms of nature when transfigured by the miraculous power of poetry."

Any one of the above definitions is a true exposition of the poems of Father Tabb—in them our human emotions blossom into rarest beauty and the commonest forms of nature are glorified by his genius until we stand transfixed with wonder at his God-given gift of interpretation.

Nothing, to him, is "common or unclean;" the lowliest weed that bends under the dust of the roadside, the tiny blossom of the wild flower, furnish an inspiration which brings forth such strains of melody, such richness of thought as pass our understanding. To the ordinary man the goldenrod is but a common wild flower which brightens for a time the dullness of the fading autumn fields, but transformed by his marvelous imagination we see it through his eyes:

## FATHER TABB

### GOLDEN-ROD

As Israel, in days of old,  
Beneath the prophet's rod,  
Amid the waters, backward rolled,  
A path triumphant trod;  
So, while thy lifted staff appears  
Her pilgrim steps to guide  
The Autumn journeys on, nor fears  
The Winter's threatening tide.

All things are transformed by the Midas touch of his genius — and so clear, so simple, so powerful is the presentation that we scarcely realize the marvel of it all; his beautiful, brilliant ideas are given to the world with all the simplicity of his unassuming child-heart and until we stop to think, to try to analyze, we do not really appreciate the greatness of his genius. He is so simple, so lovable in his verse that we simply *enjoy*, as we revel in the unanalyzed beauties of a spring day.

“In the literary world,” says an unknown writer in the *Baltimore Sun*, “there is no name associated with St. Charles College that has reflected greater glory to the alma mater than that of Father Tabb, whose rare gifts as a poet are recognized on both sides of the Atlantic. A prominent British critic some years ago placed Father Tabb in the front rank of living American poets, and a writer in the *London Spectator* did not hesitate to say that Reverend John

## THE POET

B. Tabb was one of the greatest living poets in the English language.

“Father Tabb was the author of several small volumes of exquisite verse — poems, lyrics, quatrains — that suggest the beauty of Keats, the imagination and spirituality of Shelley and the love of nature which is the distinguishing charm of Wordsworth. The poems are characterized by a delicate fancy scarcely surpassed by any poetry in our language and a depth of tenderness as rare as it is beautiful. An appreciative critic says of him: ‘The many poems concerning silence, including the fine sonnet, seem the expression of a hushed awe of such a mind in presence of a continual and universal mystery. Life is a moment of sound between two silences. Yet there is no austerity, other than artistic, no renunciation or neglect of the beautiful things of common life in view of the ultimate attainment of the ideal. It is rather that through this association with the eternal, the things of this life gain a dignity and sweetness.’ ”

Thus he writes of death:

### TO DEATH

So sweet to tired mortality the night  
Of life's laborious day,  
That God Himself, o'erwearied of the light,  
Within its shadow lay.

In certainty of the future could faith be more exquisitely expressed than in this poem?

## FATHER TABB

### EVOLUTION

Out of the dusk a shadow,  
Then a spark;  
Out of the cloud a silence,  
Then a lark;  
Out of the heart a rapture,  
Then a pain;  
Out of the dead, cold ashes,  
Life again!

Beneath this Father Perrig wrote: "He sums up  
our nineteenth century philosophy"—Price,

Nazareth, N. C.

The "Price" here quoted is Father Price, a friend  
of Father Tabb.

The poems of Father Tabb are never long. Someone  
has likened them to flute-notes clear and sweet, as com-  
pared to the rich, deep organ-tones of Sidney Lanier's  
verse. There are quatrains that like a dewdrop reflect  
the whole of heaven. Gems of thought they most truly  
are, and in lyric quality unexcelled.

They interpret the human heart with unerring  
sympathy and love, and nature with a peculiarly deli-  
cate fancy and striking imagery; yet he retains,  
withal, the beautiful simplicity which ever marks his  
life, his genius, his faith. What airy imagining is  
here:

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### PHANTOMS

Are ye the ghosts of fallen leaves,  
    O flakes of snow,  
For which, through naked limbs, the winds  
    A-mourning go?  
Or are ye angels, bearing home  
    The host unseen  
Of truant spirits to be clad  
    Again in green?

One of the most valuable sources of information regarding the more intimate side of Father Tabb's writings is a collection of notes made by the late Reverend Joseph M. Perrig. It is seldom that a biographer has access to material such as this; these notes were made in Father Tabb's volumes, and made with no thought but to throw light on some point which, without explanation from the author, lost a great deal of its force or beauty. This is truly first hand information, the poet's own interpretation of his work.

Father Perrig was a native of Switzerland who came to Virginia when a boy and, after teaching in Richmond for several years, entered St. Charles College. He was older than the average student, being in his twenty-fourth year when he began his course. He was gentle, unselfish and lovable in disposition and (partly owing to the fact that he was from Virginia) he enjoyed a close friendship with the poet-priest.

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His more mature mind appreciated the great value of the explanations which Father Tabb gave many of his poems and he jotted them down in the proper place, *i. e.*, under the poem discussed by Father Tabb.

Father Perrig's ministry covered a period of only eleven years; at his death, in December, 1913, he bequeathed his books to Reverend Thomas Rankin and among them were the two annotated volumes of Father Tabb's poems, the only authentic record extant, I dare say, of the priest's own expressions regarding his works. Treasures indeed are these little volumes! Through them we gain an insight into the heart and mind of the poet which but for his student's keen discernment of their great value would have been forever lost to the world.

Many of Father Tabb's friends and admirers tell of the magic quickness of his mind, of the brilliant epigram or the witty pun uttered on the inspiration of the moment, but from Father Perrig alone we learn that he spent *years* of thought and labor on some of his verses. For instance:

### DEUS ABSCONDITUS

My God has hid himself from me  
Behind whatever else I see:  
Myself — the nearest mystery —  
As far beyond my grasp as He.  
  
And yet, in darkest night, I know  
While lives a doubt-discerning glow

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That larger lights above it throw  
These shadows on the vale below.

The first four lines were written in 1892; Father Tabb then worked on the other four lines until March, 1896.

“His longest poem, ‘Ruin,’ ” says Father Perrig, “not yet printed and which he read to me on June 10, 1897, is the fruit of seventeen years of his thoughts and works.”

“Ruin” was not included in any of Father Tabb’s published works and, so far as I have been able to discover, was never given to the world.

These annotations also give an insight into the poet’s attitude towards his work: under the poem—

## THE SECRET

’Tis not what I am fain to hide  
That doth in deepest darkness dwell,  
But what my tongue hath often tried  
Alas, in vain, to tell —

we find the following: “Father Tabb’s favorite! He says if we are sad we do not feel like talking. We are not able to give expression to our thoughts of pleasure or sadness, for as soon as we begin to talk we break the thread of thought.”

## FATHER TABB

Another favorite of his is

### THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

The sculptor in the marble found  
Her hidden from the world around,  
As in a donjon keep:  
With gentle hand he took away  
The coverlet that o'er her lay,  
But left her fast asleep.

And still she slumbers; e'en as he  
Who saw in far futurity  
What now before us lies —  
The fairest vision that the stream  
Of night, subsiding, leaves agleam  
Beneath the noonday skies.

The day after the death of his ward, Edward J. Carroll, on October 24, 1902, Father Tabb wrote the following — which was never published:

### UNITED

Here buried side by side  
We long have waited with between us two  
A place for you.

The Powers of Darkness tried  
To chill our hearts to ashes; but behold  
They grew not cold.



## THE POET

You journey far and wide;  
Our eyes were on you till they turned your way  
To where we lay.

Henceforth, all fate defied,  
Our kindred dust commingling, three in one —  
We slumber, son.

“The best of my work, according to my judgment,”  
said Father Tabb, “is

## LIMITATION

Beneath, above me, or below;  
Never can'st thou farther go  
Than the spirit's octave-span,  
Harmonizing God and Man.

Thus within the iris-bound,  
Light, a prisoner, is found;  
Thus within my soul I see  
Life in Time's captivity.”

One of the professors at St. Charles College, Father Charles Judge, wrote a life of his brother, Father W. Judge, S. J., an Alaskan Missionary. The dedication of the volume was written by Father Tabb:

## HIS MISSION

'Twas not for gain of glittering gold he trod  
Alaska's frozen loins;

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Nay, but the superscription of their God  
On colder hearts to coin!

One of the poet's favorite haunts was a beautiful lane in the College grounds, known as the Rose Walk; on a Spring day, while loitering here he wrote on a scrap of paper

## THE DANDELION

With locks of gold today,  
Tomorrow silver-gray;  
Then blossom-bald. Behold,  
O Man, thy fortune told!

Just opposite the College stood "The Manor," a magnificent place, the home of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, now occupied by his descendants. Father Tabb often spent hours in The Manor woods and upon one of these rambles wrote:

## TO A WOOD-ROBIN

Lo, where the blossoming woodland wakes  
From wintry slumbers long,  
Thy heart, a bud of silence, breaks  
To ecstasy of song.

Since all truly great natures retain the simplicity and heart of childhood along with the attainments of manhood, so Father Tabb, like Eugene Field and

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Robert Louis Stevenson, rejoiced in a whimsical, merry and frolicsome side of his nature. This is exemplified in his volume of Child Verse and in "Quips and Quiddits," published in 1907.

His views on the woman question were stated with finality when he wrote, as far back as 1897:

### WOMAN

Shall she come down, and on our level stand?  
Nay, God forbid it! May a Mother's eyes —  
Love's earliest home, the heaven of babyland —  
Still bend above us as we rise!

Father Perrig has the following written just beneath this verse:

"Every woman ought to learn this by heart and reflect on it deeply — imagine a woman mayor or sheriff!"

Some of Father Tabb's best poems and some of his most brilliant sallies were written in his post-card correspondence with his literary associates and friends. One of the cleverest and most timely of these "hits" was the verse written when there was a question raised as to Poe's right to a place in the hall of fame:

### EXCLUDED

Into the charnel hall of fame  
The dead alone should go.  
Then write not there the living name  
Of Edgar Allen Poe.

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About this same time he expressed his opinion of the members of the Senate who rendered the decision against Poe:

If Harry Thurston Peck at Poe,  
His Peck-ability to show,  
'Tis well for him that such a foe  
No longer can return the blow.

And upon the occasion of the Poe Centenary he revised the above so that it read:

His Peck-ability to show  
Let Harry Thurston Peck at Poe,  
And thank his stars like Matthews, Brander,  
That Poe is silent now to slander,  
Or by the scourge with which they score him,  
He'd make them bite the dust before him.

In the Poe Room at the University of Virginia is the framed autograph copy of the following:

TO EDGAR ALLEN POE  
On the Fiftieth Anniversary of His Death.

Dead fifty years? Not so,  
Nay, fifty years ago  
Death, obloquy and spite,  
To curse his ashes came.  
But lo, the living light  
Beneath the breath of shame  
Indignant, spurned the night,  
And withered them in flame.

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Father Tabb, although a good deal of a recluse, was a keen observer of current events and took a great interest in the affairs of the world in general. He was keenly alive to political situations and occasionally gave vent to his feelings on the subject in such productions as

### THE UNITED STATES TO THE FILIPINOS

We've come to give you Liberty  
To do what'er *we* choose;  
Or clean extermination,  
If you venture to refuse.

or in what he facetiously called "a sneeze," in which he did not hesitate to criticise any person, party or country if he saw fit.

Upon the occasion of the lynching of a negro which took place in Delaware, he wrote the following remarkable play upon words:

Were Harriet Beecher well-aware  
Of what was done in Delaware,  
Of that unwholesome smell-aware,  
She'd make all heaven and hell-aware;  
And ask John Brown to tell-her-where  
Henceforth she best might sell-her-ware!

An editorial in one of the Richmond, Virginia, papers at the time of the poet's death spoke of him as follows: "Father John Bannister Tabb was a very

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remarkable person. He was a born man of the world, good fellow, poet and philosopher, consistently and sincerely consecrated to religious service.

"No sweeter or more genial character than his ever gladdened a wide circle of friends. He loved laughter and fun and was a born humorist, but he knew when to be serious, and deep and tender sympathy and beautiful sentiment lay close beneath the surface of his humor. He did not know how to be coarse or harsh. He loved the pleasures of life while its pain stirred the very depths of his being to affectionate and helpful response."

He was a man of brilliant talent. Under date of November 22, 1896, Edmund C. Stedman wrote Professor Thomas R. Price acknowledging receipt of what he called "the exquisitely printed, feelingly written appreciation of Virginia's flawless lyrist, Father Tabb," as follows:

"I know of no other modern songster who puts so much spontaneous feeling into the brief carols, of which the art is as unobtrusive as it is perfect; for they have the brevity and unity of the antique and the soul of christendom."

This, most appropriately and comprehensively describes much of Father Tabb's poetry. He often said that many so-called poems of great length contain much that is not true poetry. "It is almost impossible," he would say, "ordinarily speaking, to keep up the true poetic vein throughout a long poem."

Many think that amongst the English poets Father

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Tabb has not been surpassed in his power of condensing "multum in parvo." His conception of the true poet is set forth in his oft-quoted lines:

### TO A SONGSTER

O little bird, I'd be  
A poet like to thee;  
Singing my native song,  
Short to the ear, but long  
To love and memory.

Allusion has been made to Father Tabb's poems on silence: a masterly critic in the London Times remarks of the poem "To Silence:" "Grandeur can not be achieved in six lines by grandiloquence. In the immensity of what it suggests, the vast silence out of which it wakes and into which it fades, that poem is undeniably grand."

Dr. William Hand Browne in his sketch of Father Tabb in the Library of Southern Literature thus characterizes him as a poet:

"Father Tabb's poems are all short, few extending beyond the limits of a sonnet, while many are still briefer, a favorite form being the quatrain.

"Many poets when they seize a thought are apt to expand and develop it as a musician develops a theme; Tabb condenses it, many of his poems consisting of a single simile or metaphor expressed in perfect phrase. Critics have aptly called them "cameos"—the most delicate art in the smallest compass. Rounded and

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complete, they are like dewdrops on the jewel-weed, each perfect and each distinct. In their tenderness and simplicity they remind one of Simonides or Mel-eager; but the faith of the Christian gives a depth which the pagan could not attain. For the Greek poet there was nothing beyond — no symbolism of a life beyond the veil. Tender memories remained, but the threads of sympathy broke off at the grave.

“Father Tabb, like Wordsworth, is a poet of nature, but he does not lose himself in the vision. Lovely in themselves, to him the aspects of nature are far more lovely as symbols. To him, as to Berkeley, nature is a language in which God speaks to man, the poet being the interpreter. And the nature which is ever present to his memory is that of his native Virginia — its gentle hills, wild expanses and “smooth-sliding” streams; its trees and flowers and birds. Who that has ever heard the unforgettable call of the killdeer at twilight, or the liquid fluting of the wood-robin, will not feel his heart swell as the poet brings them back to memory? So intimate are they that one doubts whether any reader can feel the full beauty of these nature-touches who does not know the land that inspired them.”

On one occasion at the Virginia Hot Springs, Father Tabb met a grandson of Mr. Garland Taliaferro whom he had known years before in his native county. He sent him, through his grandson, the autograph copy of the following:



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### TO A VIRGINIAN AT THE HOT SPRINGS

Nurtured upon my Mother's knee,  
From this, her mountain breast, apart;  
Here nearer heaven I seem to be,  
And closer to her heart.  
"With my compliments to my old Amelia neighbor,  
Garland Taliaferro."

But beautiful as is the symbol to Father Tabb, it is not the symbol but the suggested thought that is the poem. For instance:

### DEEP UNTO DEEP

Where limpid waters lie between  
There only heaven to heaven is seen;  
Where flows the tide of mutual tears,  
There only heart to heart appears.

The poet is not one, however, who simply seizes a delicate fancy and clothes it with beautiful imagery; his little poems seem, in a way, detached, but through them all runs a subtle but profound philosophy, a philosophy felt, not formulated. St. Francis claims brotherhood with the birds and beasts and inanimate objects of nature — Father Tabb likewise felt a kinship with all things, the wood-robin and the tender violet are not simply objects to be perceived through the senses; they are, like ourselves, children of the Divine Father and dear to His heart.

Just as Father Tabb shunned all that was harsh or

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coarse so he delighted in all that was cheery, tender and gentle — his optimism was beautiful and his tenderness enveloped and softened pain and sorrow. One of the best known of his poems (printed in every American anthology) is the exquisitely tender and comforting one sent to a bereaved mother:

### CONFIDED

Another lamb, O Lamb of God, behold,  
Within this quiet fold,  
Among Thy Father's sheep,  
I lay to sleep!  
A heart that never for a night did rest  
Beyond its mother's breast.  
Lord, keep it close to Thee,  
Lest waking, it should bleat and pine for me!

What Father Tabb wrote came from a heart that knew and felt the deeper things of life, but his songs did not express the whole of what he felt; only now and then through a verse, or even through a single line, the deeper nature freed itself — and the melody grew luminous with feeling and with undreamed of depths of understanding and meaning.

"The lapidary among song-makers" someone once called him — he was willing to heed Wordsworth's advice "to shine in his place and be content." He found his themes in the birds and flowers around him, in the loves and joys and sorrows of those with whom he

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associated, and above all in his deep devotion to all things sacred. "He saw the spiritual in the natural and naturally voiced the spiritual."

To a friend he once confided that the poetic vision descended upon him like a direct gift from God at a moment when, following the war, he did not know where to turn. He portrays his idea of poetry as

A gleam of heaven; the passion of a star  
Held captive in the clasp of harmony;  
A silence, shell like, breathing from afar,  
The rapture of the deep, eternity.

He felt a close kinship with all the manifestations of nature, he loved them for their purity, for their delicate beauty which invariably appealed to his artist's eye, for the lessons they taught; the emotions they aroused, the enthusiasms they inspired and their symbolism of all things innocent and pure.

The lark, the wood-robin, the rose, the lily, the humble dandelion and blackberry vine, the pink clover and the white jessamine had each its message for him and through him to all lovers of nature. One of the most attractive, strong and original of his verses is

## WOOD GRAIN

This is the way that the sap-river ran  
From the root to the top of the tree —  
Silent and dark  
Under the bark,

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Working a wonderful plan  
That the leaves never know  
And the branches that grow  
On the brink of the tide never see.

In speaking of his poem "The Young Tenor," Father Tabb said: "this came to me while spending a night at the Brothers' Home in Richmond. I was asleep, when I was awakened by a beautiful tenor voice singing in the house opposite. He stopped as I awoke but his voice rang in my ears for years. One night I stayed at a friend's house near Sixth and Leigh Streets in Richmond, when I heard another singer who, in moving along, sang. It was magnificent. I was enabled to give expression to my long confined thought." When asked in this connection if it was hard for him to get a thought, Father Tabb replied: "No, it is harder to get *rid* of a thought when it comes!"

## THE YOUNG TENOR

I woke; the harbored melody  
Had crossed the slumber bar,  
And out upon the open sea  
Of consciousness, afar  
Swept onward with a fainter strain  
As echoing the dream again.  
So soft the silver sound, and clear  
Outpoured upon the night,

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That Silence seemed a listener  
O'erleaning with delight  
The slender moon, a finger-tip  
Upon the portal of her lip.

Another interesting explanation, given by Father Tabb to Father Perrig in his student days is that of the poem

## GIULIO

"Father!" — the trembling voice betrayed  
The troubled heart; "Be not afraid,"  
I softly answered — "Woe is me!"  
Dead unto all but misery!  
And yet, a child of innocence  
Is mine — a son, unknowing whence  
His origin — whom, unaware  
As with an angel's watchful care,  
Thy gentle hand hath guided. Now  
He waits the consecrating vow  
Of priesthood, and to-morrow stands  
A Levite, with uplifted hands  
To bless thee. May a mother dare  
To look upon that face, and share,  
Unseen, the blessing of her son?  
Deny me not. So be it done  
To thee in thy last agony  
As thou now doest unto me!"

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She had her will. Secluded there  
Within the cloistered place of prayer  
She saw, and wept; then, all unknown,  
Shrunk back into the world, alone.

Days passed. A winter's cheerless morn  
With summons came. A soul forlorn  
Craved help in danger imminent;  
And, Christlike, on his mission went  
The new annointed.

“Strange,” he said  
“The gleams, like inspiration, shed  
Upon the dying! There she lay,  
Poor reprobate! life's stormy day  
In clouds departing. Suddenly,  
As from a trance, beholding me,  
'*Giulio!* hast thou come?' she cried,  
And with her arms about me, died.”

He wondered; and I turned away,  
Lest tears my secret should betray.

A fallen woman, on her deathbed, recognizes in the priest her son — only a supposition on the part of the poet.

The reprobate here mentioned was a young woman from Richmond, Virginia, who lost her husband soon after the birth of her son and fell deeper and deeper. The child never knew his mother but was educated by his paternal uncle, the Protestant Bishop of Kentucky.

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The boy was not a Catholic, but the poet fancies him to have become a priest, or rather that he might have become had the uncle been a Catholic Bishop. "Father Tabb assured me," said Father Perrig, "that the parents of this child were the most beautiful couple he ever saw."

In speaking of his floral lyrics, Sister Mary Paulina says: "It is hard to restrain the temptation to cull more of the poet's dainty Flora, for it is a royal garden in which Father Tabb's muse disports, and she has a loving glance and a lyric for all the rainbow children of the sun, yea, even for the 'Wild Flowers' that strew the woods beyond the crystal gate."

Dr. William Hand Browne gives several poems which were not included in the published volumes of the priest — among those taken directly from the manuscript are the following:

### DEPRECIATION

Now, I listen in my grave  
For a silence soon to be,  
When, a slow-receding wave —  
Hushed is memory.  
Now the falling of a tear,  
Or the breathing, half-suppressed,  
Of a sigh, re-echoed here,  
Holds me from my rest.  
O ye breakers of the past,

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From the never-resting deep  
On the coast of Silence cast,  
Cease, and let me sleep!

## BEYOND

The River to the Sea,  
In language of the Land,  
Interpreter would be  
Of life beyond the strand.  
Of billowy heights that never fall  
When Winds have gone their way,  
Of waving forests, dark and tall,  
Of flocks, and herds, and fertile vales,  
Of warbling birds and blossom-spray  
That scents the wandering gales.  
Alas! 'tis all a mystery!  
She does not understand.

## DUSK

Alone I am, but lonelier  
The Twilight seems to be;  
The lengthening Shadows leading her  
To human sympathy.

No word, but a mysterious clue  
To feelings deeper far,  
She fashions in the trembling dew,  
And in the steadfast star.



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### MATINS

Still sing the Morning Stars remote  
With echoes now unheard,  
Save in the scintillating note  
Of some dawn-wakened bird.

Whose heart — a fountain in the light —  
Prolongs the limpid strain  
Till on the borderland of Night,  
The Stars begin again.

### A TRYSTING PLACE

As stars amid the darkness seen,  
When flows the deepening dawn between  
To cover them from sight,  
O'erleap the spaces of the dark,  
And, spark to quickening sister-spark,  
Commingle in the light;

E'en so a solitary way  
Do we, Beloved, day by day,  
In weariness and pain,  
Climb desolate from steep to steep,  
Till in the shadowy Vale of Sleep  
Our spirits blend again.

The work left by Father Tabb, taken as a whole, forms a wonderful kaleidoscope: along with the bright tints of his humor and gentle satire there blend the

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soft colors of his thoughts as expressed concerning the birds, the flowers, the children ; the sombre tones of his more grave and stately themes, his sonnets ; and the pure radiance of his religious and spiritual songs.

No poet of his age is so varied as to the style and subject of his verse and yet each and every gem bears plainly stamped upon it the image and superscription of his wonderful, magnetic personality. His love, his sympathy, his joyousness, and his deep reverence for all things sacred are the heritage he has left to the lovers of pure song. The power possessed by the poet-priest to bring out the beauty of the small and generally considered insignificant things of nature is well known. His fame is steadily on the increase and for many years he has been as widely read and as deeply appreciated in England and on the Continent as in America.

Dr. Browne says : "Poetry of this kind demands a very refined and delicate technique, and that of Father Tabb, within his self-imposed limits, seems *absolutely* perfect. He attempts no innovations or audacities ; his measures and rhythms are simple and familiar. The phrase is always the right phrase, which can not be bettered ; the diction is pure, direct and noble.

"The poet Herrick, whose best work in delicacy and felicity of phrase is not unlike Father Tabb's, was also threatened with loss of sight, and cheerfully alludes to his failing vision :

## THE POET

"I begin to wane in sight —  
Shortly I shall bid good-night;  
Then no gazing more about,  
When the tapers all are out."

"Father Tabb bears his privation with equal serenity, but with graver thought, as shown by the quatrain called

### A PRAYER IN DARKNESS

The day is nearer unto night  
Than to another day;  
If closer to Thee, Lord of Light,  
In darkness let me stay.

It has been said that trying to make selections from Father Tabb's poems is like culling a posy from a patch of wood-violets — those we leave always seem bluer than those we have taken. But I think the following may be regarded as representative in character:

### THE RING

Hold the trinket near thine eye  
And it circles earth and sky;  
Place it further and, behold,  
But a finger's-breadth of gold.

'Tis thus our lives, Beloved, lie  
Ringed in love's fair boundary;

## FATHER TABB

Place it further and its sphere  
Measures but a falling tear.

In speaking of his little song, "The Half-Ring Moon," Father Tabb laughingly said that it was "ten years a-coming!"

### THE HALF-RING MOON

Over the sea, over the sea,  
My love he is gone to a far countrie;  
But he brake a golden ring with me,  
A pledge of his love to be.

Over the sea, over the sea,  
He comes no more from the far countrie;  
But where the young moon used to be,  
There hangs the half of a ring for me.

The priest heard that a young girl had died in a house near Ellicott City on a certain night. As he passed the place in his walk the next evening he saw a jessamine creeping up the walls, which suggested the following poem. He wrote it then and there on a piece of loose paper, his foot on a rock, the paper on his knee and an umbrella over him — as it was raining hard.

### THE WHITE JESSAMINE

I knew she lay above me,  
Where the casement all the night

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THE POET

Shone, softened with a phosper glow  
Of sympathetic light,  
And that her fledgling spirit pure  
Was pluming fast for flight.

Each tendril throbbed and quickened  
As I nightly climbed apace,  
And could scarce restrain the blossoms  
When, anear the destined place,  
Her gentle whisper thrilled me,  
Ere I gazed upon her face.

I waited, darkling, till the dawn  
Should touch me into bloom,  
While all my being panted  
To outpour its first perfume,  
When lo! a paler flower than mine  
Had blossomed in the gloom!

INTIMATIONS

I knew the flowers had dreamed of you,  
And hailed the morning with regret;  
For all their faces with the dew  
Of vanished joy were wet.

I knew the winds had passed your way,  
Though not a sound the truth betrayed;  
About their pinions all the day  
A summer fragrance stayed.

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## FATHER TABB

And so, awaking or asleep,  
A memory of lost delight,  
By day the sightless breezes keep,  
And silent flowers by night.

## MY PHOTOGRAPH

My sister Sunshine smiled on me,  
And of my visage wrought a shade.  
"Behold," she cried, "the mystery  
Of which thou art afraid!

"For Death is but a tenderness,  
A shadow, that unclouded Love  
Hath fashioned in its own excess  
Of radiance from above."

## RECOGNITION

At twilight, on the open sea,  
We passed, with breath of melody —  
A song, to each familiar, sung  
In accents of an alien tongue.

We could not see each other's face,  
Nor through the glowing darkness trace  
Our destinies; but brimming eyes  
Betrayed unworded sympathies.

A Protestant gentleman once said to Father Tabb  
that he could not see the use of the contemplative

## THE POET

sisterhoods of the Catholic Church, while he admired the active orders. The following is Father Tabb's answer:

### THE SISTERS

The waves forever move;  
The hills forever rest:  
Yet each alike the heavens approve  
And Love alike hath blessed  
A Martha's household care,  
A Mary's cloistered prayer.

### THE DAYSPRING

What hand with spear of light  
Hath cleft the side of Night,  
And from the red wound wide  
Fashioned the Dawn, his bride?

Was it the deed of Death?  
Nay, but of Love, that saith,  
"Henceforth be Shade and Sun,  
In bonds of Beauty, one."

### PHOTOGRAPHED

For years, an ever-shifting shade  
The sunshine of thy visage made;  
Then, spider-like, the captive caught  
In meshes of immortal thought.

## FATHER TABB

E'en so, with half-averted eye,  
Day after day I passed thee by,  
Till suddenly a subtler art  
Enshrined thee in my heart of heart.

In speaking of the above, Father Tabb said: "Especially true in the case of 'Reb!' " "Reb" was the nickname of a member of the Class of '95 at St. Charles College, a young man from Georgia.

## THE CHORD

In this narrow cloister bound  
Dwells a Sisterhood of Sound,  
Far from alien voices rude  
And in secret solitude.  
Unisons, that yearned apart,  
Here, in harmony of heart,  
Blend divided sympathies,  
And in choral strength arise,  
Like the cloven tongues of fire,  
One in heavenly desire.

## COMPENSATION

How many an acorn falls to die  
For one that makes a tree!  
How many a heart must pass me by  
For one that cleaves to me!



## THE POET

How many a suppliant wave of sound  
Must still unheeded roll,  
For one low utterance that found  
An echo in my soul!

### TO THE SUMMER WIND

Art thou the selfsame wind that blew  
When I was but a boy?  
Thy voice is like the voice I knew,  
And yet the thrill of joy  
Has softened to a sadder tone —  
Perchance the echo of my own.

Beside a sea of memories  
In solitude I dwell;  
Upon the shore forsaken lies  
Alas! no murmuring shell!  
Are all the voices lost to me  
Still wandering the world with thee?

### CHILDHOOD

Old Sorrow I shall meet again,  
And Joy, perchance — but never, never,  
Happy Childhood, shall we twain  
See each other's face forever!

Yet I would not call thee back,  
Dear Childhood, lest the sight of me,  
Thine old companion, on the rack  
Of Age, should sadden even thee.

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### THE STRANGER

He entered; but the mask he wore  
Concealed his face from me.  
Still, something I had seen before  
He brought to memory.

“Who art thou? What thy rank, thy name?”  
I questioned, with surprise.  
“*Thyself!*” the laughing answer came,  
“*As seen of others’ eyes!*”

### KILLDEE

Killdee! Killdee! far o’er the lea  
At twilight comes the cry.  
Killdee; a marsh-mate answereth  
Across the shallow sky.

Killdee! Killdee! thrills over me  
A rhapsody of light,  
And star to star gives utterance  
Between the day and night.

Killdee! Killdee! O Memory,  
The twin birds, Joy and Pain,  
Like shadows parted by the sun,  
At twilight meet again!

### THE PLAINT OF THE ROSE

Said the budding Rose, “All night  
Have I dreamed of the joyous Light:

## THE POET

How long doth my Lord delay!  
Come, Dawn, and kiss from mine eyes away  
The dewdrops cold and the shadows gray,  
That hide thee from my sight!"

Said the full-blown Rose, "O Light!  
(So fair to the dreamer's sight!)  
How long doth the Dew delay!  
Come back, sweet sister shadows gray,  
And lead me from the world away,  
To the calm of the cloister Night!"

## INDIAN SUMMER

'Tis said, in death, upon the face  
Of Age, a momentary trace  
Of Infancy's returning grace  
Forestalls decay;

And here, in Autumn's dusky reign,  
A birth of blossoms seems again  
To flush the woodland's fading train  
With dreams of May.

## A PHONOGRAPH

Hark! What his fellow-warblers heard  
And uttered in the light,  
Their phonograph, the mocking-bird,  
Repeats to them at night.

### FATHER TABB

“FOR THE RAIN IT RAINETH EVERY DAY”

Ay, every day some rain doth fall,  
And every day doth rise;  
'Tis thus the heavens incessant call,  
And thus the earth replies.

### PREJUDICE

A leaf may hide the largest star  
From Love's uplifted eye;  
A mote of prejudice outbar  
A world of Charity.

### DISCREPANCY

One dream the bird and blossom dreamed  
Of Love, the whole night long;  
Yet twain its revelation seemed,  
In fragrance and in song.

### SAP

Strong as the sea and silent as the grave,  
It ebbs and flows unseen;  
Flooding the earth — a fragrant tidal wave —  
With mist of deepening green.

### ALTER EGO

Thou art to me as is the sea  
Unto the shell;  
A life whereof I breathe, a love  
Wherein I dwell.

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## THE POET

### MOMENTS

Like the manna, mute as snow,  
Swift the moments come and go,  
Each sufficient for the needs  
Of the multitude it feeds;

One to all, and all to one,  
Superfluity to none,  
Ever dying but to give  
Life whereon alone we live.

### LOSS

For one extinguished light  
Of Love, all heaven is night;  
For one frail flower the less,  
The world a wilderness.

### FINIS

O to be with thee sinking to thy rest,  
Thy journey done;  
The world thou leavest blessing thee and blest,  
O setting sun;  
The clouds, that ne'er the morning joys forget,  
Again aglow,  
And leaf and flower with tears of twilight wet  
To see thee go.

## FATHER TABB

### THE OLD YEAR'S BLESSING

Like Simeon of old,  
The new-born babe I hold  
Upon my heart:  
According to Thy word,  
Let now Thy servant, Lord,  
In peace depart.

### THE DIAL

A dreamer in the dark, I grow  
Prophetic in the morning glow;  
Thereon a slender shade I throw —  
A sign in Babylon to say  
“Thou’rt in the balance weighed, O Day,  
Found wanting, and shalt waste away,”  
And now in Night’s pavilion, all  
The stars are writing on the wall,  
“Behold, thy kingdom too must fall!”

### MORNING AND NIGHT BLOOM

A star and a rosebud white,  
In the morning twilight gray,  
The latest blossom of the night,  
The earliest of the day;  
The star to vanish in the night,  
The rose to stay.

A star and a rosebud white,  
In the evening twilight gray;

## THE POET

The earliest blossom of the night,  
The latest of the day;  
The one in darkness finding light,  
One, lost for aye.

## FRATERNITY

I know not but in every leaf  
That sprang to life along with me,  
Were written all the joy and grief  
Thenceforth my fate to be.

The wind that whispered to the earth,  
The bird that sang its earliest lay,  
The flower that blossomed at my birth —  
My kinsmen all were they.

Aye, but for fellowship with these  
I had not been — nay, might not be;  
Nor they but vagrant melodies  
Till harmonized to me.

## THE SEED

Bearing a life unseen,  
Thou lingerest between  
A flower withdrawn,  
And — what thou ne'er shalt see —  
A blossom yet to be  
When thou art gone.

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## FATHER TABB

Unto the feast of Spring  
Thy broken heart shall bring  
What most it craved,  
To find, like Magdalen  
In tears, a life again .  
Love-lost — and saved !

The following was suggested by the tree tops waving outside Father Tabb's classroom window :

## AGAINST THE SKY

See, where the foliage fronts the sky,  
How many a meaning we descry  
That else had never to the eye  
A signal shown !

So we, on life's horizon-line,  
To watchers waiting for a sign,  
Perchance interpret Love's design,  
To us unknown !

## A SIGH OF THE SEA

"Why is it," once the Ocean asked,  
As on a summer's day,  
Basking beneath a cloudless sky,  
In musing rest he lay,

"Why is it that, unruffled still,  
The Welkin's brow I see,



## THE POET

While mine, with racking wind and tide,  
Deep-furrowed oft must be!

“Her richest gems, by night displayed,  
Man’s filching grasp defy;  
But safety for my treasures, none,  
Though buried deep they lie.

“The hands that from her diadem  
In reverence recoil,  
Are bold my depths to penetrate  
And of their wealth despoil.

“A thousand ships with cruel keel  
My writhing waves divide,  
But mariner hath never steered  
Athwart her tranquil tide.

“Why is it thus, that rest to her  
And toil to me is given?—  
That she the blessing ever meets,  
And I, the curse of heaven?”

The Ether heard. Through all her depths  
A deeper azure spread,  
And to the murmuring Ocean thus  
With radiant smile, she said:

“Who cleaveth to the earth, as thou,  
Ne’er knows tranquillity;  
Naught pulses in my bosom wide  
But God, whose own am I.”

## FATHER TABB

### ALL IN ALL

One heaven above;  
But many a heaven below  
The dewdrops show —  
God's tenderness  
Subdued in every teardrop, to express  
The whole of Love.

### TO A BLIND BABE, SLEEPING

Are thy dreams dark? Or is the light  
Alone denied thy waking sight,  
While softer stars their vigils keep  
Within thy hemisphere of sleep?

Yes: haply, as noon-blinded beams  
Awake in darkness, o'er thy dreams  
The pity that begets our tears,  
A kindling radiance appears.

### SECURITY

The noonday smiles to hear  
The oft-repeated tale  
Of shadows lurking near  
Her sunbeams to assail.

Nor heeds the placid Night  
The prophesy of doom  
To drown her stars in light  
As fathomless as gloom.

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### INDIAN SUMMER

No more the battle or the chase  
The phantom tribes pursue,  
But each in its accustomed place  
The Autumn hails anew:  
And still from solemn councils set  
On every hill and plain,  
The smoke of many a calumet  
Ascends to heaven again.

### A RUBRIC

The aster puts its purple on  
When flowers begin to fall,  
To suit the solemn antiphon  
Of Autumn's ritual.

And deigns, unwearied, to stand  
In robes pontifical,  
Till Indian Summer leaves the land,  
And Winter spreads the pall.

### RELEASE

So long I am a prisoner  
As Time and Thought surround me here:  
When Time is dead, and Memory  
Deserts the ramparts, I am free.

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## FATHER TABB

### SILENCE

A sea wherein the rivers of all sound  
Their streams incessant pour,  
But whence no tide returning e'er hath found  
An echo on the shore.

### TO A WOOD-VIOLET

In this secluded shrine,  
O miracle of grace,  
No mortal eye but mine  
Hath looked upon thy face.

No shadow but mine own  
Hath screened thee from the sight  
Of heaven, whose love alone  
Hath led me to thy light.

Whereof — as shade to shade  
Is wedded in the sun —  
A moment's glance hath made  
Our souls forever one.

### IN ABSENCE

All that thou art not, makes not up the sum  
Of what thou art, Beloved, unto me:  
All other voices, wanting thine, are dumb;  
All vision, in thine absence, vacancy.

## THE POET

### IDEALS

Could Day demand a gift of Night,  
And Night the boon bestow,  
'Twould be that heaven of star-delight  
Where dreams departed go.

Could Night the gift demand, and Day  
The benefit confer;  
'Twould be, upon his twilight way  
A lengthened hour with her.

### BARGAINS

"What have you in your basket?"  
I questioned Mother Sleep.  
"Ah, many a golden casket  
Of jewel-dreams I keep  
At pastime prices for the friend  
Who's half-an-hour or more to spend."

### THE RAINPOOL

I am too small for winds to mar  
My surface; but I hold a Star  
That teaches me, though low my lot,  
That highest Heaven forgets me not.

### CHANTICLEER

A crowing, cuddling little Babe was he,  
A child for little children far or near.

## FATHER TABB

When he stood and crowed upon his mother's knee.  
The morning echoed, "Welcome, Chanticleer!"  
He was a crowing, cuddling little Babe!

When his mother wore, alas, her life away,  
He was wonder-wide to see the children weep,  
But he crowed, and cuddled close enough to lay  
His head upon her heart, and went to sleep:—  
He was a cuddling, crowing little Babe!

God Himself was tender to him; for behold,  
An Angel in a dream (the children said)  
Came and kissed him till his little cheek was cold;  
So he never saw the tears the twilight shed.  
He was a crowing, cuddling little Babe!

## WINTER TREES

Like champions of old,  
Their garments at their feet,  
Defiant of the cold  
The wrestling winds they meet:  
Anon, if victors found,  
With vernal trophies crowned.

## FATHER TABB'S POETRY

(From "The New Century")

Not a great while ago critics were asserting that  
the vogue of poetry had passed. They pointed to

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the fact that the decay in appreciation of poetry was evident. This showed a tendency to misread facts: it also indicated that the critics are largely dominated by the publishers and fashions. It was asked: "Is it possible to re-vitalize a form of thought that seemed, at least, to have gone with the poetic childhood of the race?" The little singers, perhaps of an empty day, of course, were piping in the gloom. Austin and Dobson were singing—tender, pretty little songs. Others were devoting both thought and talent to ambitious efforts in the form consecrated by time, and they were producing too, works which, despite many beauties of detail, failed to flower into a splendor that recalls the middle Victorian era.

Those who were gleaned in the wornout furrows at last made a "find." The Athenaeum eagerly hailed it. The poet was John B. Tabb. He was a real poet; there could be no mistaking that fact. He was strangely similar to Shelley, with a hint of Poe at his best, with, of course, his spectral paraphernalia omitted. Even the critics grew lyrical in their praise at the exquisite glimpses of lyric beauty. Few knew that the author, John B. Tabb, was "Father Tabb," and that he was a professor at St. Charles College, Ellicott City, Md. The note that Father Tabb struck was frankly lyrical. He is, in our opinion, one of the most notable exemplifications in modern art of the lyrical spirit, confined only by rigorous canons.

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So much has been written of romanticism and realism that it is rather a mark of distinction in criticism to ignore the terms and cherish the essence of each. We have been told that we could not have strayed farther from the truth when we classed Father Tabb as a realist. And yet we were not altogether sure that in the elemental sense in which we are using the term he is not realistic, for his art, notwithstanding its lyric aloofness, is most directly and intimately associated with life, and invariably he composes with his "eye on the object."

As a lyrist he is supreme. He is concerned with impressions rather than with documents, with the imaginative expression of the emotions rather than with photographic literalness; the truth is there but the truth made beautiful because seen by the eye of a poet. Father Tabb is fundamentally, absorbingly a poet; the gift of the magical word has been miraculously vouchsafed him. He has been elected to utter the truth in terms of fervor and beauty. At his best — in such things as "Poe-Chopin," "Shelley," "Eternity" — he has touched heights and depths unknown to the mass of his contemporaries.

"The White Jessamine" is an expression that was unknown before the Victorian era — unless it has been foreshadowed in some of the Elizabethan and Jacobean love songs. There are touches of Tennyson's "Maud" in it; it is simple; yet the truth in it is so general that all can feel it. It has the vision



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—piercing, intolerable—of Shelley, the verity of Tennyson, and the overflowing melody of Poe. Another exquisite poem, full of color, altogether magical in mood and temperament, is "Ave: Sidney Lanier."

Father Tabb is in direct line of literary descent from the greatest of the English poets. Still there is little in his poetry, in its accent or movement, to remind one of the past. Again and again in his poetry Father Tabb strikes that "sheer, inimitable Celtic note" which Matthew Arnold has taught us so readily to recognize. We certainly do not go beyond the truth when we affirm that in such a splendid phantasy as "To a Wood-Robin" and in such exquisite expressions as "Transfigured," "The Sisters," "My Messmate," there is an inevitable felicity, a graphic nearness and splendor, a lyric fervor which are as rare as the Greek Kalends in English poetry.

His work, piercing in tenderness, reticent and technically finished, is the work of an exquisite artist in words, an admirable psychologist, a religious soul. He is one of the most vital forces in contemporary letters—he carries the credentials of genius."

The above masterly criticism of the work of Father Tabb was found in the annotated volumes of his poems, preserved by Father Perrig. The clipping was from "*The New Century*," as before stated, but

## **FATHER TABB**

bore no date, neither was the name of the writer given. It seems, however, a most fitting ending for the chapter devoted to the poetic side of the Poet-Priest.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PRIEST

To quote once more from Reverend F. Joseph Magri: "As great as is Father Tabb the poet, he is greater still as the priest of God. So profound was his humility that, after his ordination to the diaconate, he wished to go no further but to remain a deacon and thus teach at St. Charles College. His superiors insisted that his was an undoubted priestly calling and so, at their bidding, he was soon privileged to stand at the Altar of God and offer to Him the infinite sacrifice of the Mass.

"Each morning before beginning his college duties he would fervently pray and meditate; the servers who in turn would assist him at his daily Mass all testify to the deep and touching devotion with which Father Tabb offered to God the first fruits of the day."

One of the servers referred to says: "It was my privilege to serve Father Tabb's Mass for several years, taking my turn with another of the students; he prepared for this sublime religious act by daily meditation. How much time he devoted to meditation no one knows. He began his Mass at five o'clock A. M. and one morning I went to the Chapel by

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mistake at four o'clock and Father Tabb was there engaged in meditation. I was not greatly surprised at this for it was rumored that he could be found at all hours of the night in the gallery overlooking the Chapel."

It was at the Altar of God that he attained that radiance of spirit that shone through his whole being and even when that saddest of afflictions—blindness—came upon him, he was still possessed of the peace and joy which spring from things not temporal but eternal.

Reverend Lucian Johnston of St. Thomas Church, Baltimore, gives a delightful sketch of Father Tabb as he knew him and paints for us a most vivid picture of his celebration of the Christmas Mass. Father Johnston says:

"I first knew Father Tabb somewhere in the seventies when I was a little barefoot boy playing around my father's home at Waverly, near here. The home was then quite a rendezvous for many old Confederate and literary friends of my father's. Vice-President Stephens, General Toombs, Sidney Lanier, and others were often visitors and among them frequently was Father Tabb. I distinctly remember how at first I was extremely timid with him; and that was because as a mere boy I did not appreciate the exquisite tenderness of his nature.

"Then, when I went to St. Charles, I have the next vivid recollection—of his first Mass; I think it was at midnight of a Christmas. I do not now remember

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what he said but I do still remember that his few words delivered in his peculiarly sensitive tones impressed me profoundly. They came like the flash of the angelic light before the shepherds — and then, as quickly, the brilliance faded. I was then only fourteen but it all seemed very sweet, something 'rich and strange,' unlike anything I had hitherto known. It is curious how that Mass-scene is today so vivid — and its vividness is due to his strangely beautiful exquisiteness.

"From then on I knew him, of course, like the other students, except that I saw a great deal more of him in vacation time. His nature ever impressed me as peculiarly delicate, in spite of his biting wit and almost boyish love of joke. Were a fairy sunbeam to become imprisoned in a human body — that about conveys my idea. He was meant for all things delicate, strangely delicate in spite of the fact that nature had not endowed him with a good physique.

"I suppose his poetry is the best reflection of his delicacy — timidly sweet, like an elf looking from a moonlit rosebush, yet mischievous — a child somewhat after the manner of Francis Thompson without the latter's moodiness. And it seems to me that he himself was so excessively shy just because of this fairy delicacy which shrank from the noise and roughness of workday life.

"Like a good many who survived the horrors of the ancient regime of the South, he never quite got used to modern ways. My own father was equally

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helpless in that fashion. But all those men had that peculiar delicacy of soul which seems now to be rarer and rarer. Sometimes I think they were wiser than we — wise with the wisdom of the lilies of the field, even though War's scythe did mow them down so mercilessly."

Can it be that the midnight Mass which so vividly impressed the boy that it remains with him to this day, is the one mentioned in M. S. Pine's biography as the first Mass celebrated by the young priest? It would seem from what she says of this Mass that it must be identical with the one described by Father Johnston: "Holy Orders were conferred upon him during the Ember Week of Advent, December 20, by Archbishop Gibbons in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Baltimore. It was in the College Chapel, at the midnight Mass of Christmas that he had the privilege of offering the Divine Victim to His Eternal Father for the first time; and so deeply affected was he by the greatness and sacredness of the act that he would celebrate only one Mass although the Church allowed her priests to say three at the solemn Feast of the Nativity of Christ. At the close of the Gospel he turned and addressed his audience in brief but impressive tones, referring with affectionate gratitude to the beautiful chalice he had just used, it being a testimonial of the love and appreciation of his pupils. His love overflowed in thanksgiving to Almighty God who permitted him to celebrate his first Mass in the Chapel so dear to him; and he ex-

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pressed an ardent desire that after a life consecrated to his beloved pupils, he might offer the sacrifice for the last time within its holy walls."

God heard his prayer and granted it in fullness, for from that day until the day of his death the gifted poet-priest was a part of the College. Toward the end of his life, when his sight became very dim, he practically said Mass from memory. The students who acted as his servers were instructed to be ready to prompt him but so complete was his attention and so wonderfully retentive was his memory that never in the two years of his blindness did he falter.

He gave to the College the service of his whole being; and the angels alone could measure the height of moral, spiritual and literary influence which he exerted, not only on those who came directly under the gentle influence of his personality in the classroom, but on hosts of friends and strangers alike — through his letters and through his published works.

Father Tabb's religious poems have been characterized as "gems of the sanctuary" and an eminent critic says of them: "the more purely devotional poems, dealing with the mysterious and sacred things of his faith, are not within the province of mere literary criticism. But, as we might expect, it is the tenderer and more human aspect of things divine that appeal to him most strongly: the Holy Babe as the type of infant innocence and His Mother as the type of motherhood. Many of these poems treat of children and of childhood, and always with

## FATHER TABB

an ineffable tenderness and almost reverence as if some light from the Manger at Bethlehem shone about each baby head."

### AT THE MANGER

When first her Christmas watch to keep,  
When down the silent angel, Sleep,  
With snowy sandals shod,  
Beholding what His Mother's hands  
Had wrought, with softer swaddling bands  
She swathed the Son of God.

Then skilled in mysteries of night,  
With tender visions of delight  
She wreathed His resting-place;  
Till, wakened by a warmer glow  
Than heaven itself had yet to show,  
He saw His Mother's face!

In the last three lines he achieves the sublime!  
The little Christmas poem "Out of Bounds" has  
been called Father Tabb's "Missionary Sermon:"

### OUT OF BOUNDS

A little Boy of heavenly birth,  
But far from home today,  
Comes down to find His Ball, the Earth,  
That Sin has cast away.



## THE PRIEST

O Comrades, let us one and all  
Join in to get Him back His Ball!

Other noted Christmas poems from the pen of the gifted priest are:

The Christmas Babe — generally thought to bear reference to the Christ Child but in reality referring to a little friend of Father Tabb's who was born at the time of the celebration of the High Mass on Christmas Night:

So small that lesser lowliness  
Must bow to worship or caress;  
So great that heaven itself, to know  
Love's majesty, must look below.

## THE EXPECTED OF NATIONS

While Shepherd Stars their nightly vigil keep  
Above the clouds of Sleep.  
Long prophesied, behold the manchild, Morn,  
Again is born.

## A CHRISTMAS CRADLE

Let my heart the cradle be  
Of Thy bleak nativity!  
Tossed by wintry tempests wild,  
If it rock Thee, Holy Child,  
Then as grows the outer din,  
Greater peace shall reign within.

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### THE LIGHT OF BETHLEHEM

'Tis Christmas night! the snow,  
A flock unnumbered lies!  
The old Judean stars aglow,  
Keep watch within the skies.

An icy stillness holds  
The pulses of the night:  
A deeper mystery enfolds  
The wondering Hosts of Light.

Till, lo, with reverence pale  
That dims each diadem,  
The lordliest, earthward blending, hail  
The Light of Bethlehem!

### MISTLETOE

To the cradle-bough of a naked tree,  
Benumbed with ice and snow,  
A Christmas dream brought suddenly  
A birth of mistletoe.

The shephred stars from their fleecy cloud  
Strode out on the night to see;  
The Herod north-wind blustered loud  
To rend it from the tree.

But the Old Year took it for a sign,  
And blessed it in his heart:

## THE PRIEST

“With prophesy of peace divine,  
Let now my soul depart.”

## THE LAMB-CHILD

When Christ the Babe was born,  
Full many a little lamb  
Upon the wintry hills forlorn  
Was nestled near its dam;

And, waking or asleep,  
Upon His Mother's breast,  
For love of her, each mother-sheep  
And baby-lamb, He blessed.

## THE ANGEL'S CHRISTMAS QUEST

“Where have ye laid my Lord?  
Behold, I find Him not!  
Hath He, in heaven adored,  
His home forgot?  
Give me, O sons of men,  
My truant God again!”

A voice from sphere to sphere —  
A faltering murmur — ran —  
“Behold, He is not here!  
Perchance with Man,  
The lowlier made than we,  
He hides His majesty!”

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Then hushed in wondering awe,  
The spirit held his breath,  
And bowed: for, lo, he saw  
O'ershadowing Death,  
A mother's hands above,  
Swathing the limbs of Love!

## GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

'Tis Christmas Night! Again —  
But not from heaven to earth —  
Rings forth the old refrain  
“A Saviour's Birth!”

Nay, listen: 'tis below!  
A song that soars above,  
From human hearts aglow  
With heavenly love!

## A CHRISTMAS CHIME

At Christmas time from clime to clime  
Each star to star doth sweetly chime,  
Till all the heavens are ringed with rhyme.

Then loosed above, a note thereof  
Floats downward like a wandering dove,  
And all the world is ringed with Love!

The above is not included in any of Father Tabb's volumes of poems but was a stray bit, published on an illustrated page in a Christmas magazine.

## THE PRIEST

### THE ARGONAUTS

To Bethlehem! To Bethlehem!  
The Magi move and we with them,  
    Along the selfsame road;  
Still following the Star of Peace,  
To find at last the Golden Fleece —  
    The Spotless Lamb of God!

Many of the religious poems of the priest bear on the Man of Sorrows and the shadow of Gethsemane and Calvary, and many of them reflect the joys of the Easter Season — what more beautiful idea than the fragrant witnesses of the Resurrection depicted in

### EASTER FLOWERS

We are His witnesses: out of the dim  
Dark region of Death we have risen with Him.  
Back from our sepulchre rolleth the stone,  
And Spring, the bright angel, sits smiling thereon.

We are His witnesses: see, where we lay,  
The snow, that late bound us, is folded away;  
And April, fair Magdalen, weeping anon,  
Stands flooded with light of the new-risen Sun.

Again his Easter joy peals forth triumphantly in the following unique definition:

## FATHER TABB

### EASTER

Like a meteor, large and bright,  
Fell a seed of golden light  
On the field of Christmas night  
    When the Babe was born;  
Then, 'twas sepulchered in gloom  
Till above His holy tomb  
Flashed its everlasting bloom —  
    Flower of Easter Morn!

### EASTER LILIES

Though long in wintry sleep ye lay,  
The powers of darkness could not stay  
Your coming at the call of day,  
    Proclaiming Spring.

Nay: like the faithful virgins wise,  
With lamps replenished ye arise,  
Ere dawn the death-anointed eyes  
    Of Christ, the King.

Many of Father Tabb's poems seem rather obscure until illumined by his explanation of the circumstances under which they were written. For instance:

### THE CRUCIFIX

Day after day the spear of Morning bright  
Pierces again the ever-wounded side,

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## THE PRIEST

Pointing at once the birthspring of the Light,  
And where for Love the Light Eternal died.

"This came to me," said Father Tabb, "when I was present at the Confirmation of Philip Carrol at the Manor Church, when the sun shining through the window, fell upon the Crucifix upon the Altar."

On August 15, 1893, Father Tabb preached upon the Assumption at old St. Peter's Church in Richmond. He summed up his entire sermon in four lines:

## THE ASSUMPTION

Nor Bethlehem nor Nazareth,  
Apart from Mary's care;  
Nor Heaven itself a home for Him  
Were not His Mother there!

"The New-Year Babe" — the first stanza of which is as follows:

Two together, Babe and Year,  
At the midnight chime,  
Through the darkness drifted here  
To the coast of time —

was written for a little nephew of President Dinneen of St. Charles College. The poet spoke of the New Year as "twin-brother to Father Dinneen's nephew." The entire poem comprises six stanzas.

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Father Tabb once explained to his class that since Easter was regulated by the Spring moon, it was full moon during the agony in Gethsemane, and full moon every Eve of Good Friday. Hence the poem

### THE PASCHAL MOON

Thy face is whitened with remembered woe;  
For thou alone, pale satellite, didst see  
Amidst the shadows of Gethsemane,  
The mingled cup of sacrifice o'reflow;  
Nor hadst the power of utterance to show  
The wasting wound of silent sympathy,  
Till sudden tides, obedient to thee,  
Sobbed, desolate in weltering anguish, low.

The Holy Night returneth year by year;  
And, while the mystic vapors from thy rim  
Distil the dews, as from the Victim there  
The red drops tickled in the twilight dim,  
The Ocean's changeless threnody we hear,  
And gaze upon thee, as thou didst on Him.

Father Tabb meditated on this in the moonlight on every Holy Thursday night.

The first book of poems published by the poet-priest appeared in 1884, published privately; and for the next ten years he gave the public nothing from his pen save through the magazines in this country and in England. Then in 1894 Small, Maynard and



## THE PRIEST

Company of Boston brought out his second volume, "Poems," and so great was the popularity of the collection that although the first edition appeared in December 1894 a second was called for in January 1895 and before the end of that year, a third and a fourth; this little volume has now run through fifteen editions.

Just before the publication of 'Poems,' Father Tabb gave the world the gem of his religious verse in 'An Octave to Mary,' a de luxe edition in white and gold, having as a frontispiece the Burne-Jones 'Annunciation,' and ten years later came 'The Rosary in Verse' which was dedicated to Bishop Curtis and limited to three hundred and fifty copies. This was the most elaborate of Father Tabb's works, having fifteen full page decorative drawings and initial letters by Thomas B. Meteyard.

But not alone in these volumes do we find his sacred poems — they run like a thread of gold through all his works. M. S. Pine says: "Father Tabb's passionate love of the Dogmas of the Church has found ardent utterance in his poems, as one is forced to confess: indeed I dare say they form his chief message. The priest chants in high, worthy and persuasive verse the Eeternal Truths, and deep mysteries of the Faith: 'God, the All in All,' Immortality, the Creation, the Fall and Redemption, the supreme love of God and of the neighbor, Heaven, Hell (with shuddering beauty defending God's justice) and

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Purgatory, the Sacraments and the Virtues, the glories of the Priesthood and the Religious State. In truth the harvest of heavenly wisdom garnered in these little sheaves of poesy is incalculable, the Sovereign Truth to whom they are consecrated, as was the whole life of the poet, has shed into them the perfumed essence of heavenly grace, that unction we find so often in the writings of saints and holy men. To him the very arrangement of the liturgical year is a suggested epic, based as it is on a deep parallel between the evolution of the seasons and that of the Christian soul of the human race."

## CHAPTER XII

### TWILIGHT

For four or five years before his death Father Tabb's sight was growing dimmer and for two years he was in total darkness — the heaviest possible affliction to one whose eyes were accustomed to feast on every aspect of nature and whose powers of observation were acute and well trained.

When his sight was so impaired as to make it impossible for him to fill his position longer, he gave this notice to the press: "My sight nearly gone, I remain where I am — not as the Faculty would generously have me, a pensioner of the college — but paying as long as I am able, full board. It is only to keep me from seeking some asylum that the Faculty consents to my having my own way — the greatest kindness it can do me."

An editorial in a Richmond, Virginia, paper made the following comment about this time: "The announcement of the failing eye-sight of the gifted poet-priest, Rev. John Bannister Tabb of St. Charles College, Howard County, Maryland, is received with a sense of personal sorrow not only by those honored by the poet's friendship, but by many others to whom the distinguished author is unknown except through the inspiration and keen pleasure derived from the

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spirituality, the aesthetic beauty, the perfect rhythm found in his verse. To Homer and Milton came the affliction of loss of sight, although this great physical deprivation seemed but to unfold to them the 'vision splendid' of the soul. To no poet of recent years are the lyrics of Father Tabb more closely allied than to those of Philip Bourke Marston, who, almost totally blind from youth, was yet one of the truest, choicest poets of his time. To both Marston and Tabb was given almost ethereal delicacy of fancy and the same unerring sense of exquisite beauty of the simplest works of nature.

"For many years an able instructor in English Literature, the author has no more ardent admirers than the students, past and present, of St. Charles College — those who have been privileged to enter into a fuller appreciation and closer communion with master minds through the vivid interpretation of their instructor. The inspired lines of Shakespeare, Tennyson, Keats and Shelley are at the tongue's end of this humble, earnest priest and it is a consolation to his friends to know that in the twilight of dimmed sight many of the greatest thoughts of the greatest minds will bear him company.

"To the imagination of the dreamer Father Tabb adds the courage of the soldier and the christian. He enters upon a period of earthly trial not with a spirit of vain repining but of hopeful strength. Fortified by the mental resources of a lifetime, and surrounded by helpful appreciation, Father Tabb's inspiration as

## TWILIGHT

a poet can still go on. His vigor of mind will be a constant incentive to further poetical work, and although surrounded by the shadows of twilight, he can still say in the words of the Prophet Zechariah that 'at evening time there shall be light.' "

This prediction was more fully realized than anyone at the time of its writing could have imagined. Father Tabb retained his bright cheerfulness to the end — no one shunned or pitied him because of his affliction and with his mind's eye he continued to see the beauties of nature and his sunny optimism even led him to make light of what to another would have been a burden almost past the bearing.

In greeting, an old friend said to him one day when his sight was almost entirely gone: "Well, Johnny, how are you?" "O," he replied, "this blindness is not as black as it's painted!" And reference has already been made to his humorous request to Cardinal Gibbons that he give him a new "See."

His loss of sight came just at the time when the invention of the aeroplane was attracting the attention of the world and when the achievements of the Wright brothers were the theme of greatest interest. Father Tabb gave the following limerick to the public:

There once were two brothers named Wright  
Who went up in aerial flight;  
But a poet I know  
Who much higher did go,  
For he soared until "clean out of sight!"

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One of the first intimations that his friends outside the college walls had of his threatened loss of sight was the publication, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, of

## GOING BLIND

Back to the primal gloom  
Where life began,  
As to my mother's womb  
Must I, a man,  
Return:  
Not to be born again,  
But to remain;  
And in the School of Darkness learn  
What mean  
"The things unseen."

He jested at misfortune and in response to condolences sent quips which made smile and tear spring together. But what the affliction really meant to him, despite his cheery attitude, the deep pathos of his condition and his pitiable suffering and deprivation are shown in

## FIAT LUX

"Give us this day our daily bread," and *light*:  
For more to me, O Lord, than food, is sight:  
And I at noon have been

## TWILIGHT

In twilight, where my fellow-men were seen  
"As trees," that walked before me. E'en today  
From time to time there falls upon my way  
A feather of the darkness. But again  
It passes; and amid the falling rain  
Of tears, I lift, O Lord, mine eyes to Thee,  
For, Lo I see!

And his beautiful resignation is set forth in one of his last poems:

## THE SMITER

They bound Thine eyes, and questioned, "Tell us now  
Who smote Thee." Thou wast silent. When today  
Mine eyes are holden, and again they say  
"Who smote thee?" Lord, I tell them it is Thou!

Ten of these songs from the dark he left us — published in the posthumous volume of "Later Poems" which appeared in 1910.

In his days of darkness one great solace of his loneliness was the gift of music which remained to him to the last, and he would often spend hours at a time in the College Chapel, seated at the great organ, "alone with his memories and his melodies."

Father Tabb's blindness did not take from him the privilege of celebrating the Mass and it was a pathetic sight to see a man who had always been so active, so

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devoted to outdoor life, growing more feeble as the days passed, and helpless to a great extent — throwing his old-time spiritual vigor into the service so dear to his heart.

It has been said that he made his affliction a diadem upon his priestly brow.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE END

From the time of his loss of sight the poet's health had been gradually declining and in the fall of 1909, when very feeble, he became the prey of a serious bronchial trouble and no hope of his recovery was entertained, yet his death came as a decided shock when on the night of November 19th, he had a sudden sinking spell from which he never rallied but passed peacefully into the long sleep "so sweet to tired mortality."

The remains of the poet priest lay in state at St. Charles College; the students asked the privilege of standing as a guard of honor about the bier of their beloved companion and instructor, and on November 21st the funeral services were held at the College, after which the body was taken to Richmond, Virginia, and laid to rest in beautiful old Hollywood Cemetery.

The funeral sermon at St. Charles was preached by Rev. D. J. Connor of Scranton, Pennsylvania. Through the kindness of President Dinneen (of St. Charles College) I am enabled to give here the beautiful tribute paid to the poet-priest by his gifted pupil and friend:

"How powerless does death seem in a case like this to win a real victory. It was surely no violent transi-

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tion by which the soul of Father Tabb passed from the temporal to the eternal. As an exiled spirit he seemed to tread the rough paths of earth, where most of us are content to find a home. It was never more than the thinnest veil that separated him from the invisible world, and hid from him the full meaning of those intimations from beyond, which he made the subject of his meditation and his song. All nature was to him an apocalypse — a partial revelation of the beauty that is eternal,

‘My God has hid Himself from me  
Behind whatever else I see,’

he said, and in these words it is not only the poet that speaks but the man as we all knew him; and now by his death we do not feel that a life has been rudely interrupted, as in most cases we involuntarily do, but that rather it has been emancipated and intensified. The world of spirit which was as vivid to him as the world of sense, is surely no strange element for that ardent soul, which used material things not as realities but as shadows and symbols. The light of faith which was a lamp to him has guided him safely through the darkness, and his own beautiful words

“The beam  
Of everlasting morning wakes upon  
His dazzled gaze, revealing one by one  
His visions grown immortal in the gleam.”

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“But yet Father Tabb’s death is an occasion of more than ordinary sorrow. In him the literary world has lost a great genius, our Alma Mater has lost its chief ornament and we have lost more than all — a true friend. As to the value to be attached to Father Tabb’s contributions to literature, only the most discriminating critics have as yet discovered and ungrudgingly allowed him the place he is destined to occupy among his contemporaries. The field of his art was a limited one, his muse having never aspired to anything more pretentious than the lyric, the song that is

“Short to the ear, but long  
To love and memory.”

but in his own province it is doubtful if he has ever been surpassed. His work, however, was absolutely devoid of that garishness and boisterousness which will win quick applause.

“The noonday never knows,” he said  
“What names immortal are.”

“Like that other Catholic poet, Francis Thompson, who died a year ago, his name was the property of the few who were able to discern genius when it comes unheralded, and as in his case the world will no doubt be aroused to a sense of its loss by the announcement of his death.

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“ 'Tis night alone that shows  
How star surpasseth star.”

“Nature endowed him abundantly with the gifts which make the poet. He was possessed first of all with a rare faculty of intuition, upon which, much more than upon reasoning, he depended as a guide, not only in detecting aesthetic values, but also in judging the characters and situations of everyday life. And well he might for it was well nigh infallible. This keenness of perception enabled him to seize those more illusive phases of beauty, which are like revelations of our hidden selves, that only the true poet can make known to us. Then the exquisite music of his verse which is almost suggestive of some set melody, the sureness and felicity of his expression, the purity of his language, the masculinity of his thought, the utter artlessness, if I may say so, of his art — these qualities constitute his unassailable patent of nobility in the world of letters.

“But Father Tabb as he will always linger in our memory, was essentially a worshipper. His art was not an end but a means. Poetry was, for him, not a substitution for religion, but an inspiration that made religion the more necessary.

“Although he worshipped at a thousand shrines it was not the God of Pantheism, but the God of Faith, the God of Revelation. Child of a generation content with the worship of nature, he rose above the limitations of their poetic creed, and true and responsive as

## THE END

he was in the art tendencies of his day, he was not a man to rest satisfied with tendencies but went straight for the conclusion towards which they converged. Like St. Augustine in a former Age his soul could never be contented with the vague mysticism with which literature is too often satisfied to rest as if there were no higher philosophy. He craved for personal and daily intercourse with his Maker and Saviour. He found a strong practical christianity the fulfillment of these aspirations, which it is one of the highest charms of poetry of the past century to express, and like another Augustine he could say to the intellects of his day, who made their religion consist of a kind of romantic but interminable and impractical quest of the Holy Grail: "*Quaerite quod quaeritis. Sed ibi non est ubi quaeritis.*" His imagination could, it is true, detect God's dwelling in the light of setting suns, but his faith found a more real presence in the light of the sanctuary lamp. His religion was not a sentiment, but a service. It found its best expression not in beautiful verse, but in its heroic Christian Patience — his touching self-denial, his absolute and unreserved resignation to the will of God.

"As to that one event of his life, which meant so much to him, and to which most of us here owe the opportunity of knowing Father Tabb at all, his conversion to the Catholic Church, I feel utterly at a loss to speak. No one who has not himself taken the step, can tell either the cost or the gain. Cost him it did

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without doubt. Like so many illustrious converts of the last century, and in obedience to the same intellectual impulse, Father Tabb unhesitatingly left companionships and associations from which one of his affectionate nature and strong attachments must have found it doubly hard to sever, and sought a home in the midst of strangers — strangers not only to him, but often to his tastes and sentiments and ideas. Yet no one can say that he did not find what he sought. He was content to lose his life but we are all witnesses of how abundantly he gained life by the sacrifices. If any one ever found a home in the Church Father Tabb certainly found one. Always a man of great spirituality, of deep religious earnestness, of strong faith and tender piety, he saw in Catholicity what his soul had longed for. Man was there treated as a supernatural being. Grace had its regular means of operation side by side with nature in a visible and imposing dispensation of Providence, that seemed to be conducted in defiance of all laws of history, but yet was willing to have its claim judged by the strictest historical canons. The great truths of revelation were treated not as something transcendental, from which the human reason could not trust itself to draw conclusions, but as matters on which not only the reason but the emotions might take hold, as naturally as the child loves its mother, and as safely as a friend can put confidence in a friend. Not only was there belief in the Real Presence, but that belief used the same matter-of-fact logic which we exercise in everyday

## THE END

affairs. Catholics, he saw, not only defended the dogma on principle, but paid visits to the Blessed Sacrament. They not only believed in the Communion of Saints, but they believed so genuinely, so frankly, as to ask the Saints for their intercession with God, and to pray for the souls of their departed friends.

“What these Catholic devotions became to Father Tabb most of us well know, and those of us who did not know, knew their friend only partially. He was a Catholic to his heart’s core. As he himself expressed to a priest only a few weeks since, when asked the circumstance of his conversion, “I was always a Catholic — born a Catholic. Whenever any doctrine of the Church was spoken of, I knew it was true as soon as I heard it. I would have been a member of the Church before I was, if I had learned what the Catholic doctrines were, and had known that they were taught and practised in the Catholic Church.” When at last he did believe, he believed with all his strength and all his mind, and there is many a Catholic today among those who were taught their religion at their mother’s knee, for whom Christ’s presence on the altar, Mary’s influence and authority in heaven as the Mother of Jesus, the duty of assisting the souls of Purgatory, took on a new meaning after they had met this amiable man of God, this gentle yet irresistible witness to the unseen.

“What is more gratifying, however, for us to recall today as we stand round the mortal remains of our

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friend, is not what he got from religion, but what he gave in return. Christianity is beautiful but it is austere. The shadow of Calvary will obstinately throw its shadow over the happiness of every Thabor. Human life is hard to idealize. Christianity alone has succeeded in doing it, and she has done it not by escaping from the stern facts of mortal existence or forgetting them, but by recognizing and embracing them with a well-tempered spirit. "Dispose thyself to patience rather than to consolation," says the Following of Christ, "and to carry the cross rather than to gladness," and it is the only philosophy that has stood the test successfully. The world is full of quixotic plans for a millennium, and they would all begin by changing conditions. The Saints, on the contrary, ended by changing conditions about them but they began by meeting them, by bowing to them as the inscrutable dispensations of an All-Holy Will, that needs not our genius or our talent, but only our obedience and our docility, to accomplish its belated purpose as infallibly on earth as in heaven.

"Few men have been more deeply impressed with the reality of Divine Providence than Father Tabb, or have paid it a more sincere or more genuine homage by their lives. The presence of God was to him the most luminous of truths. The will of God was the medium through which he looked at whatever befell him, and the thought that reconciled him to all the asperities of his lot, and enabled him to bear them



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with a cheerfulness and patience that will ever be a precious memory to the friends that witnessed them. His resignation under that last great affliction which darkened his declining days among us was the fortitude of perfect Christian faith. "I have seen Saint Paul in chains!" was the exclamation of Ignatius' friends after visiting him in his prison at Salmanaca. It was also my sentiment a few months ago, when I came to St. Charles after having heard of Father Tabb's total and irreparable loss of eyesight. In reply to my inquiries, he answered that he was never happier in all his life. Not a doubt now remained in his mind of what God wished of him, 'and,' he added, 'if the Almighty came to me and said: 'John Tabb, you can have your eyesight back by asking for it,' I would not ask. I would be afraid of proving unfaithful to responsibilities of which I might not be fully aware. Now I know perfectly what is God's will and I am resigned to it.'

"I have said that Father Tabb's religion consisted not in sentiment but in service. The same was characteristic of his friendship. He considered no sacrifice too great, no demand upon his time or his means too large, no personal concern or disappointment or aspiration too trivial, no necessities of sickness too repulsive, when it was a question of his friends. His loyalty resembled more the unselfishness and disinterestedness of a woman's devotion than any quality we are accustomed to find in man's love for man.



## THE END

The Richmond, Virginia, *News-Leader* of November 23, 1909, contained the following account of the funeral services held at St. Peter's Church.

"As if in poetic tribute to the memory of the poet who drew from her the inspiration for so much of 'the good, the true and the beautiful,' Nature wept over the bier of John Bannister Tabb today. The blue was veiled by a cumbrous grey mist that darkened the day and Heaven's tears fell from the sombre-vaulted skies upon the casket as the body of the poet-priest was lowered to its last resting place in Hollywood Cemetery.

"The funeral of Father Tabb took place from St. Peter's Church at ten o'clock this morning. Requiem High Mass was sung, the celebrant being Rev. Father J. J. Bowler. The Rev. Father De Gryse served as deacon and the Rev. Father Perrig of Fredericksburg as sub-deacon.

"Within the sanctuary, flanked by lines of surpliced acolytes who sat at the altar rail, were the Right Reverend Augustus Van De Vyver, Bishop of Richmond, and a dozen priests from out-of-town parishes of this diocese.

"The ceremonies in the Church — the old Cathedral where Father Tabb as a theological student, when he taught the pupils of the parish school of St. Peter's a quarter of a century ago, served at the Mass — were beautiful, impressive and edifying.

"In the large assemblage that occupied the pews were former pupils of Father Tabb. There were pres-

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ent, too, many of the parishioners who knew and loved the brilliant Tabb in his student days: there were among the score of priests in the Church seated in the sanctuary probably a dozen who were his classmates at St. Charles College, where he read philosophy and theology and whence he was graduated into the priesthood of the faith of his adoption, for Father Tabb was a convert of catholicism in his early youth. There were among those who mourned at the bier others who loved and admired him, Confederate veterans who knew him as a sailor lad when he responded to the first call for volunteers in 'the days that tried men's souls' and went forth to do battle for the Southland he loved so well.

"The funeral sermon was preached by the Reverend Dr. Joseph Magri of St. Peter's. It was the touching tribute of one whose intimate association with Father Tabb extended through a long term of years. Dr. Magri made an affecting reference at the opening of his panegyric to the circumstance that he stood in the presence of five of the preceptors of his student days at St. Charles College, Ellicott City, Md. But from one the spirit had fled.

"He reviewed briefly the distinguished career of the gifted Father Tabb, discussed the great moral influence of the life and works of the priest, and recounting his varied accomplishments, predicted immortality for the poems that have made the name of John B. Tabb famous in the world of literature.

"Dr. Magri's sermon was an able and scholarly dis-

## THE END

course, tenderly affecting and deeply touching at times. He paid tribute to Father Tabb the philosopher, the moralist, the theologian, and the poet, but placed above all these John Bannister Tabb, the priest of the Roman Catholic Church.

"While sombre vested priests officiated at the sacrifice of the Mass, offered for the repose of the soul of the brilliant Father Tabb, a male choir intoned the Gregorian Requiem Chant. Following the obsequies in the Church, a brief service was held at the grave."

Attending the services in the Church were delegates from the Knights of Columbus, McGill Catholic Union, Confederate Memorial Literary Society, Daughters of the Confederacy, R. E. Lee Camp of Confederate Veterans, Hollywood Memorial Association, Confederate Home for Women, Virginia State Library, Virginia Historical Society, and the press of Richmond.

The pall-bearers were: Active—Dr. Lewis H. Taylor, Gordon Blair, Llewellyn McVeigh, John C. Hagan, James Creamer, John Chaffin, Clayton Torrence, and P. H. Donahoe.

Honorary—Governor Claude A. Swanson, Major William A. Anderson, Colonel Morton Maryre, Dr. George Ben Johnston, Dr. Armistead Taylor, J. Stewart Bryan, Alfred B. Williams, Dr. Daniel Coleman, R. Travers Daniel, and James B. Harvie.

The poet was laid to rest in the section belonging to his friend Mr. Gordon Blair—it was his wish and request that he be allowed to lie in this beautiful

## FATHER TABB

Southern Cemetery. And there he sleeps, one of the many great men of the old Commonwealth, and around his lowly bed a loving hand has planted the flowers mentioned in his poems — there may be found the lily and the rose, the violet and jessamine and their humbler sisters of the wildwood so dear to the poet's heart, and above him the silent stars keep watch.

### IN AETERNUM

If Life and Death be things that *seem*,  
If Death be sleep, and Life a dream,  
May not the everlasting sleep  
The dream of Life eternal keep?

Father Tabb was a faithful priest, a gifted teacher, an earnest patriot, a gentleman of the old school, a brilliant writer, and a charming friend.

When suffering and trouble came upon him, he bore them with manly and Christian fortitude and softened them with his own quaint philosophy. His intimacies and his friendship knew no lines — he loved mankind. He had the quick sympathies and child-heart of Stevenson and Eugene Field and was known far and wide, not as the Reverend John Bannister Tabb, M. A., but by the homelier and more loving title of "Father Tabb."

And as his sympathies and his friendships were regardless of beliefs and forms and opinions, so the sorrow for his death and the loving reverence for his memory are universal.







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